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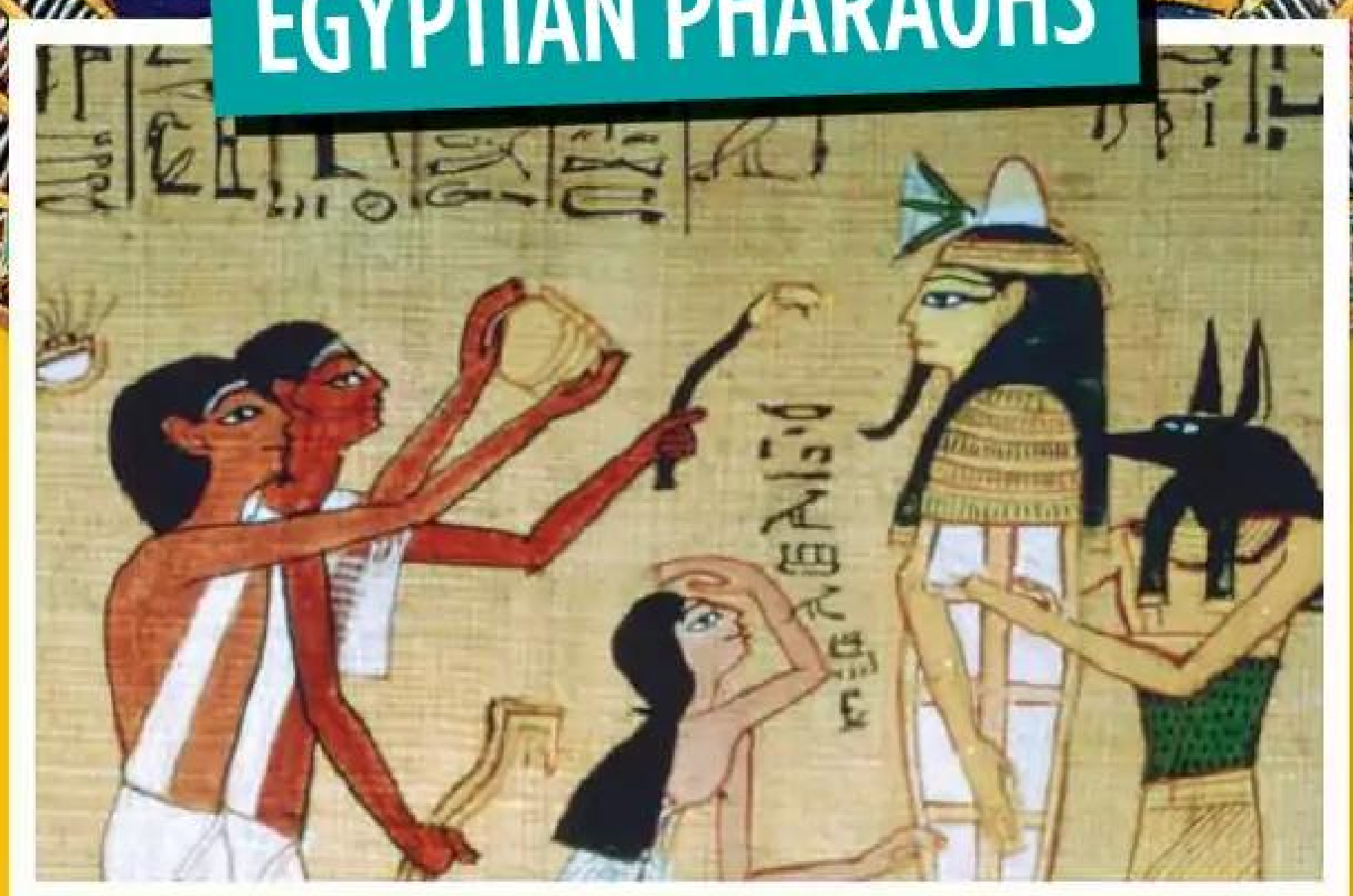
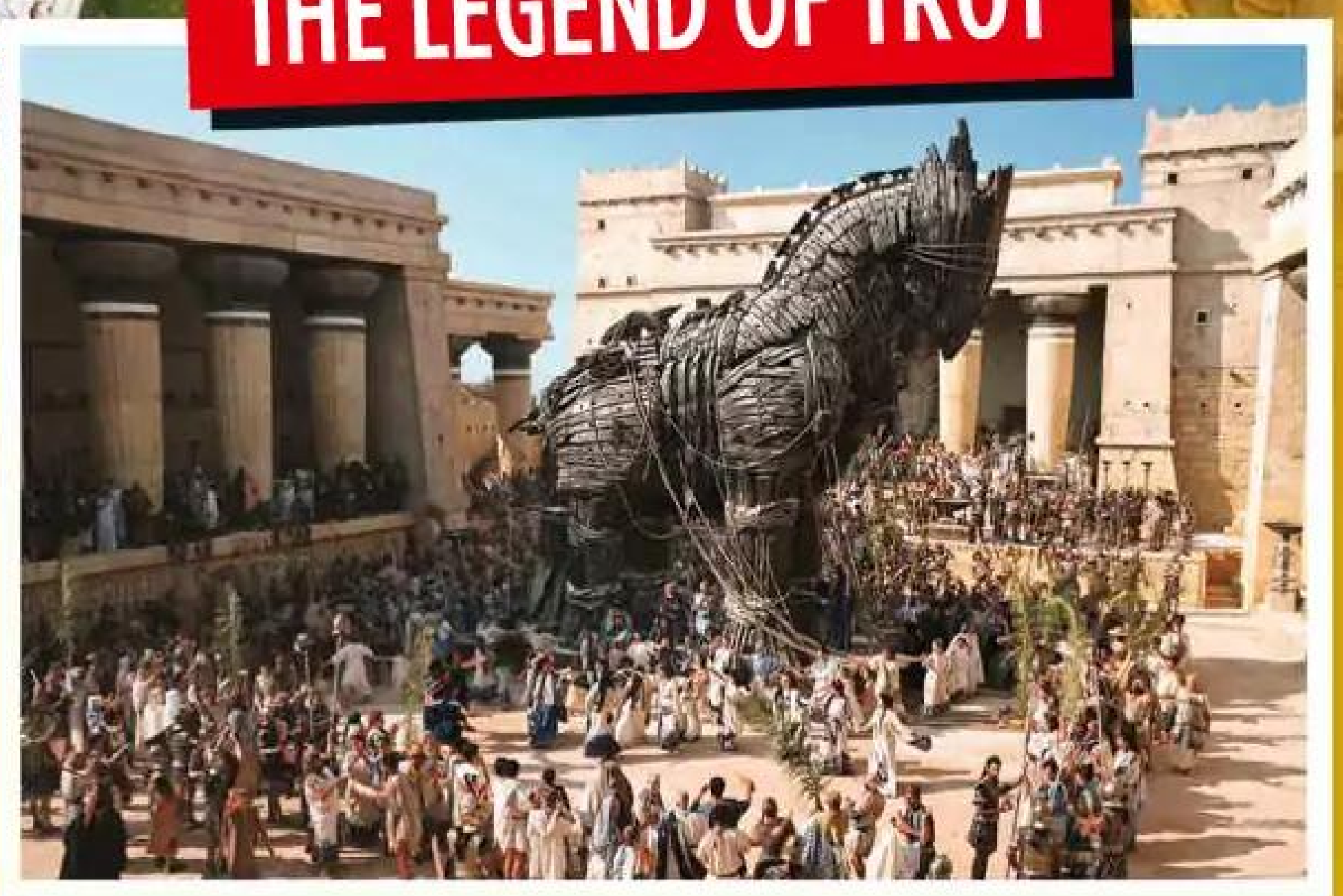


EGYPTIAN PHARAOHS



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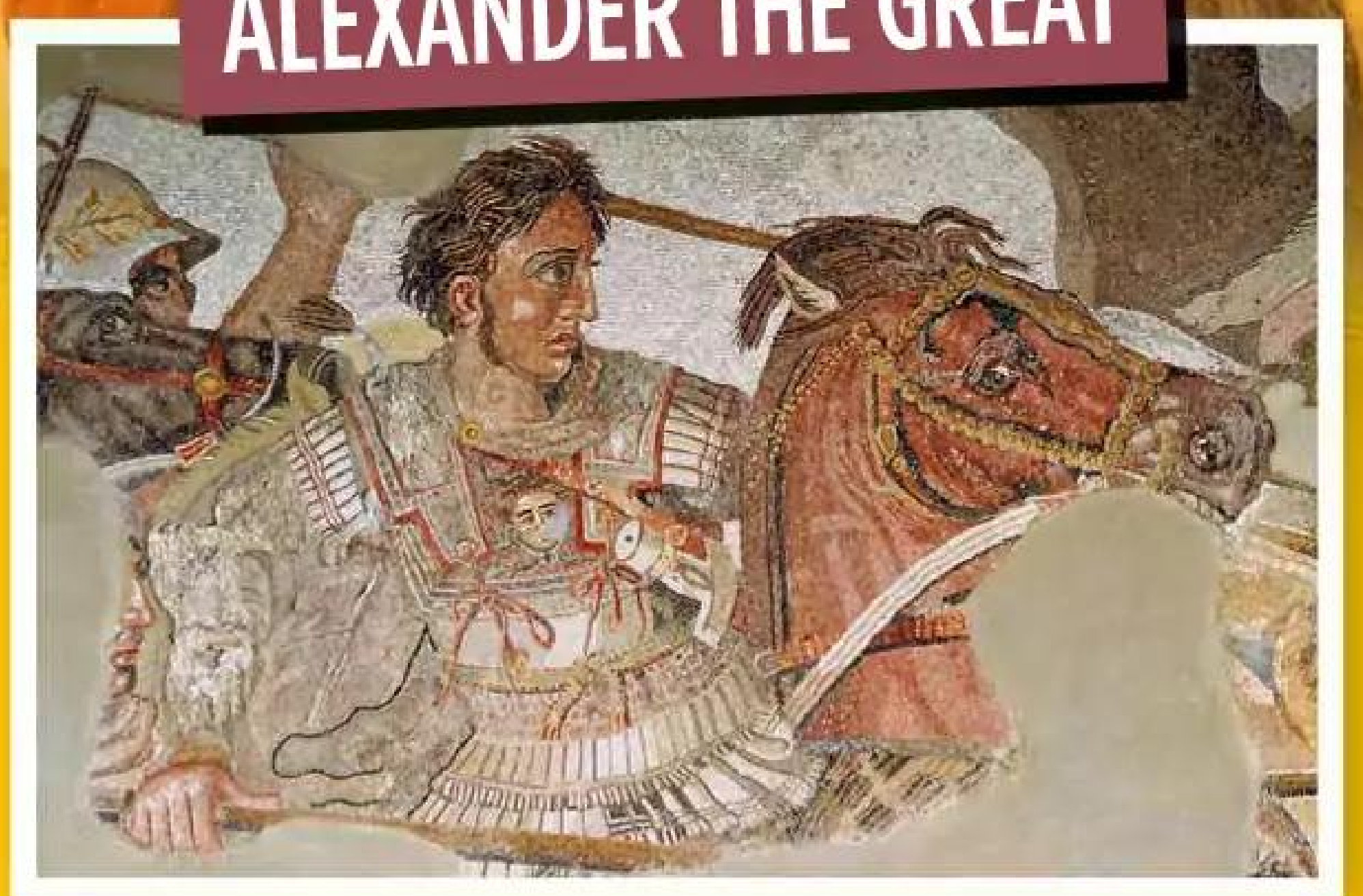

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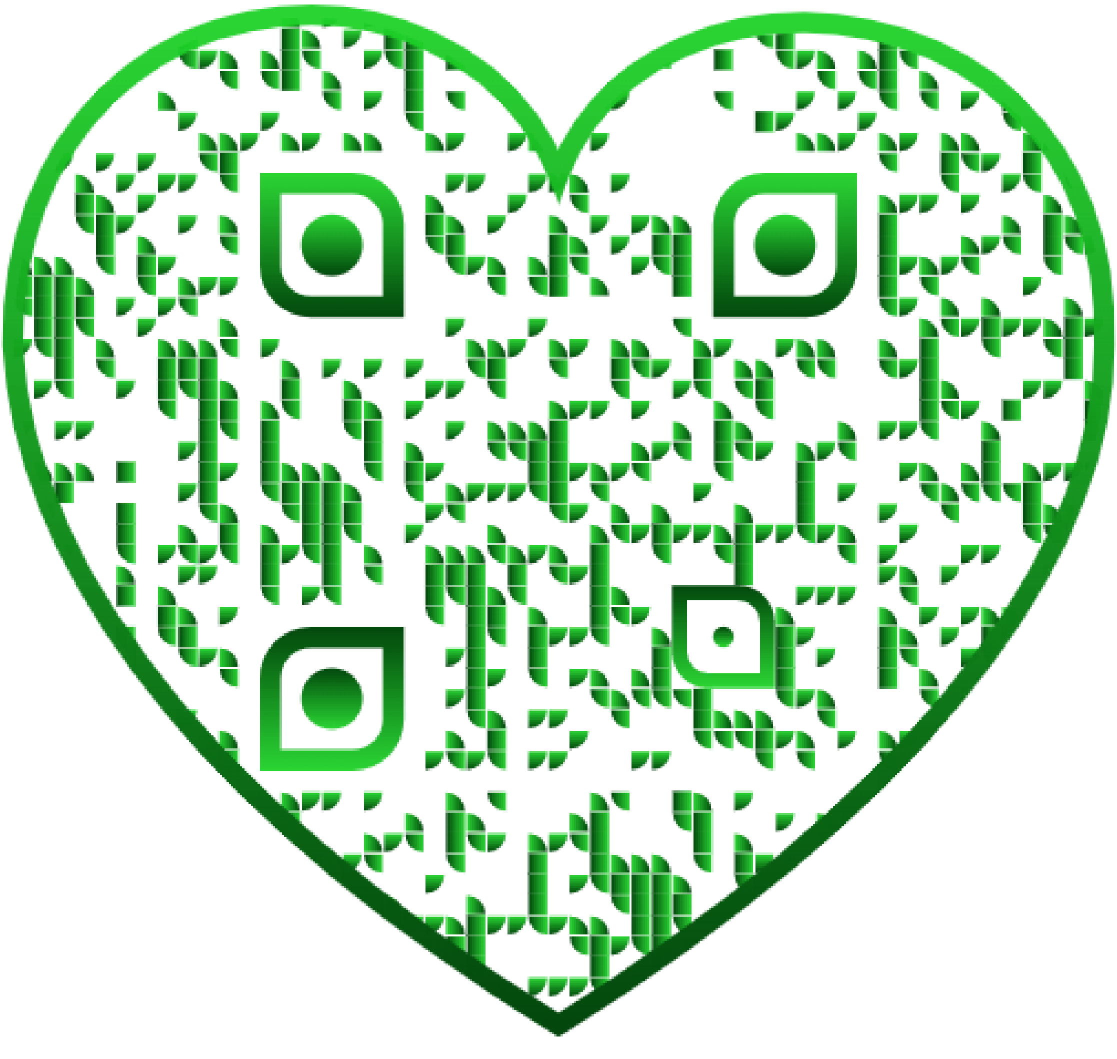

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# WELCOME

A relief shows Akhenaten (*left*) with his wife Nefertiti and three of their daughters

From Egypt to Greece, the history of the ancient world is packed with incredible stories: all-powerful gods, bloody conflicts and mighty empires.

For this special edition, we've pulled together a host of content on some of history's greatest ancient civilisations, starting our journey in ancient Egypt with a look at the pharaonic age.

From there, we explore ancient Greece, the birthplace of democracy and home to a pantheon of gods, flexing their power from their home on Mount Olympus. We'll also be taking a closer look at the legend of Troy, one of the most famous stories in Greek mythology, as well as the life and feats of Alexander the Great, king of Macedon and one of history's greatest military minds.

You can also discover the monumental showdown that took place between two of the earliest superpowers: Rome vs Greece.

I hope you find this special edition interesting and informative.

**Charlotte Hodgman**
Editor

Charlotte

HISTORY EXTRA

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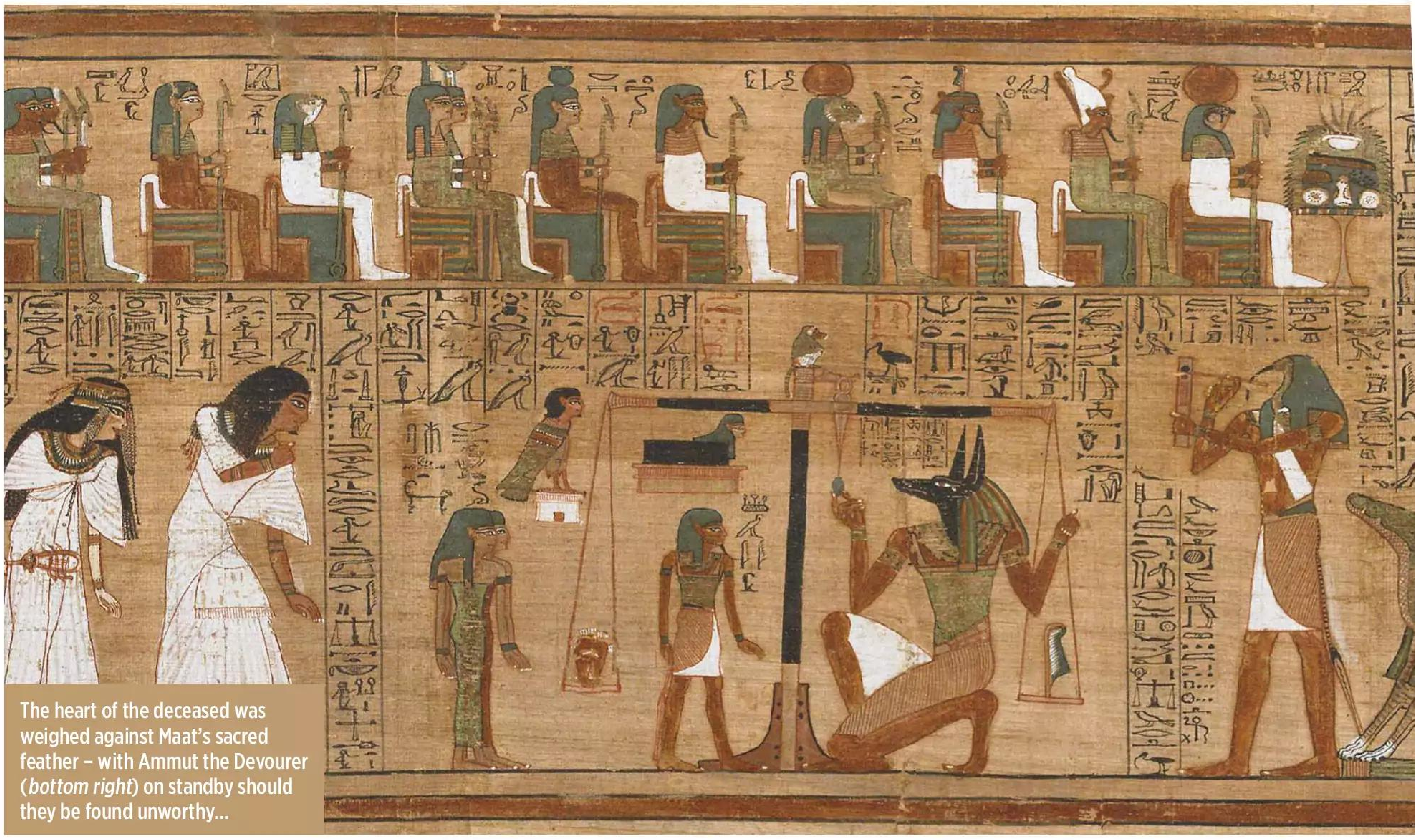

The heart of the deceased was weighed against Maat's sacred feather – with Ammut the Devourer (*bottom right*) on standby should they be found unworthy...

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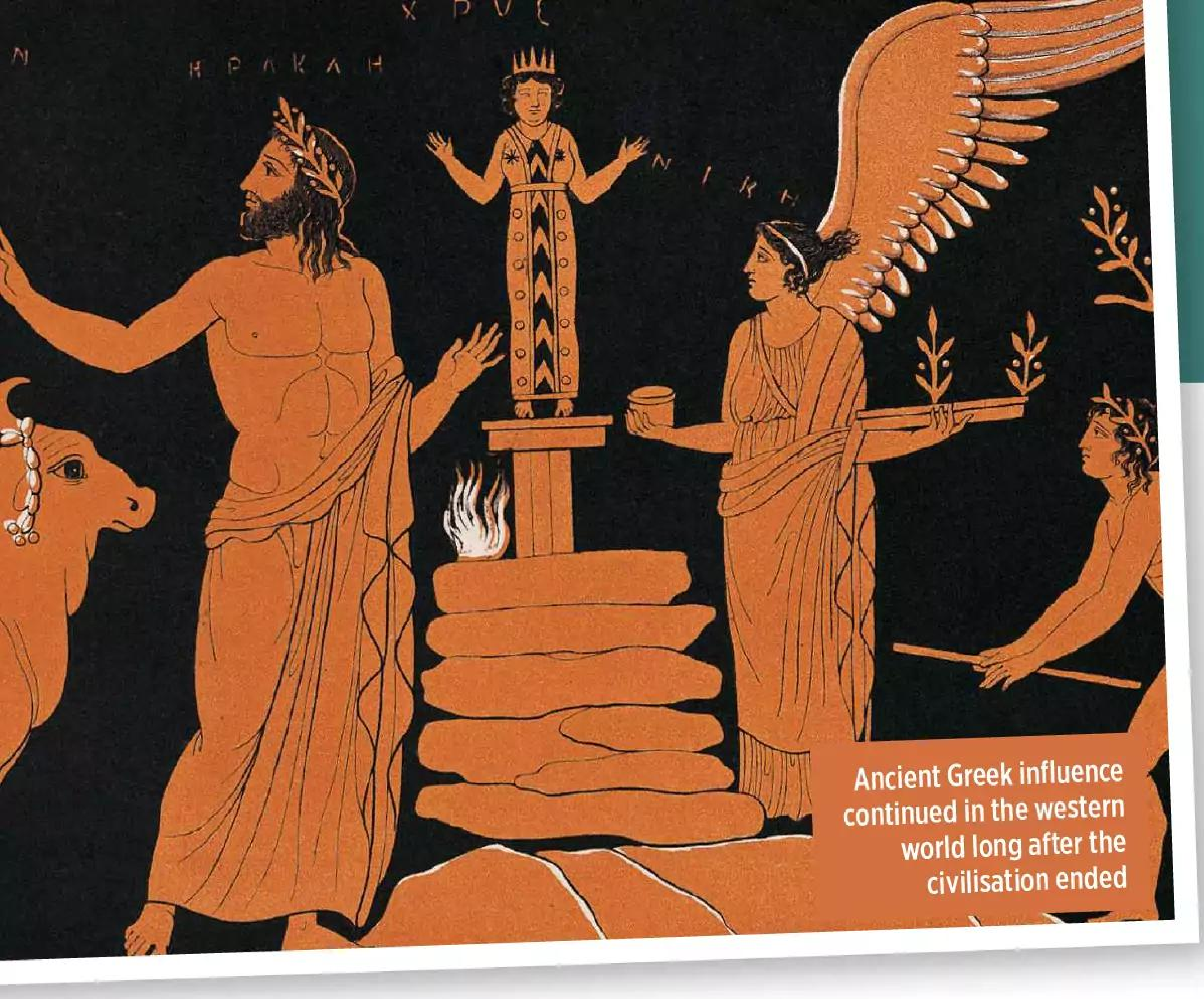

Ancient Greek influence continued in the western world long after the civilisation ended

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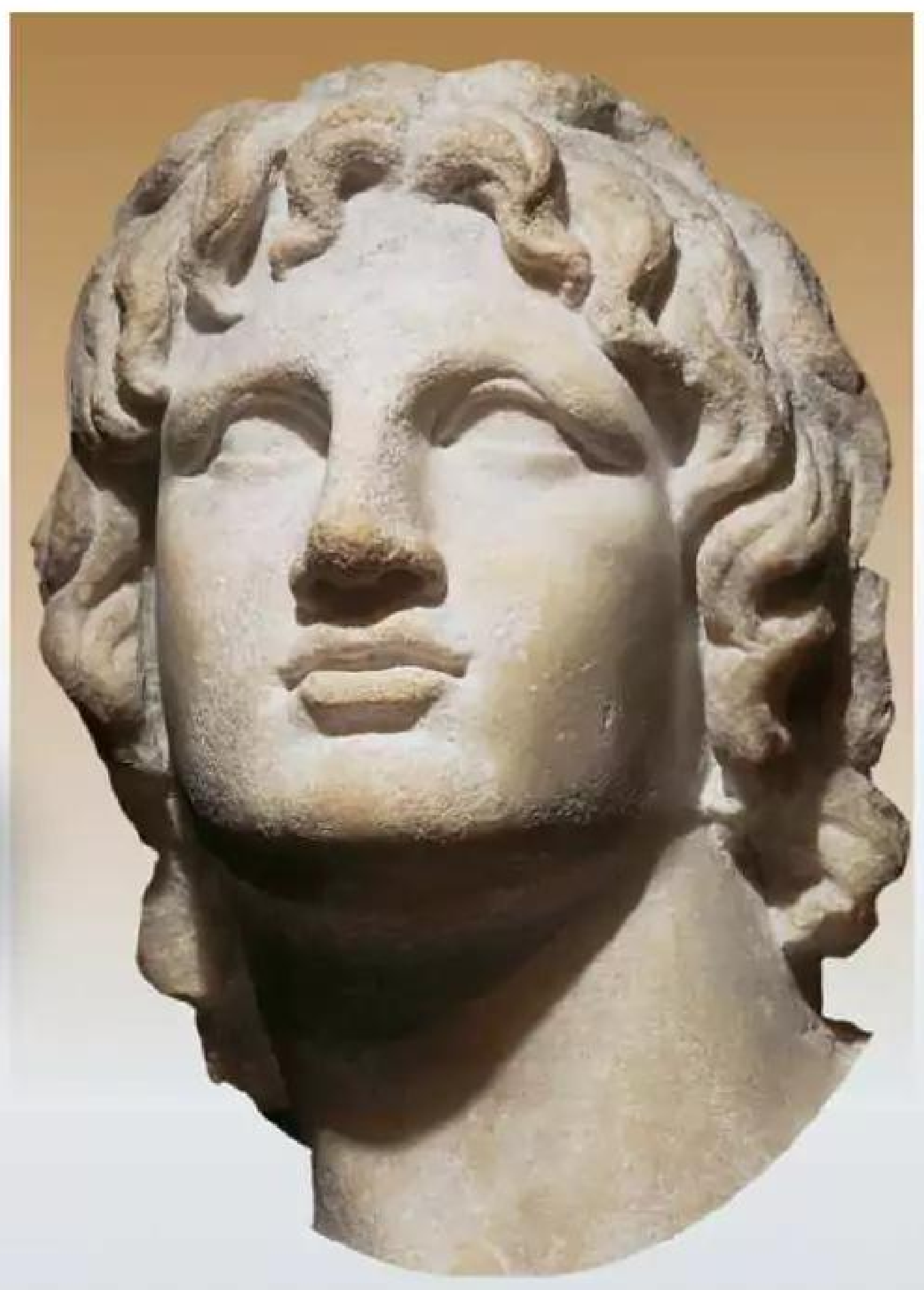

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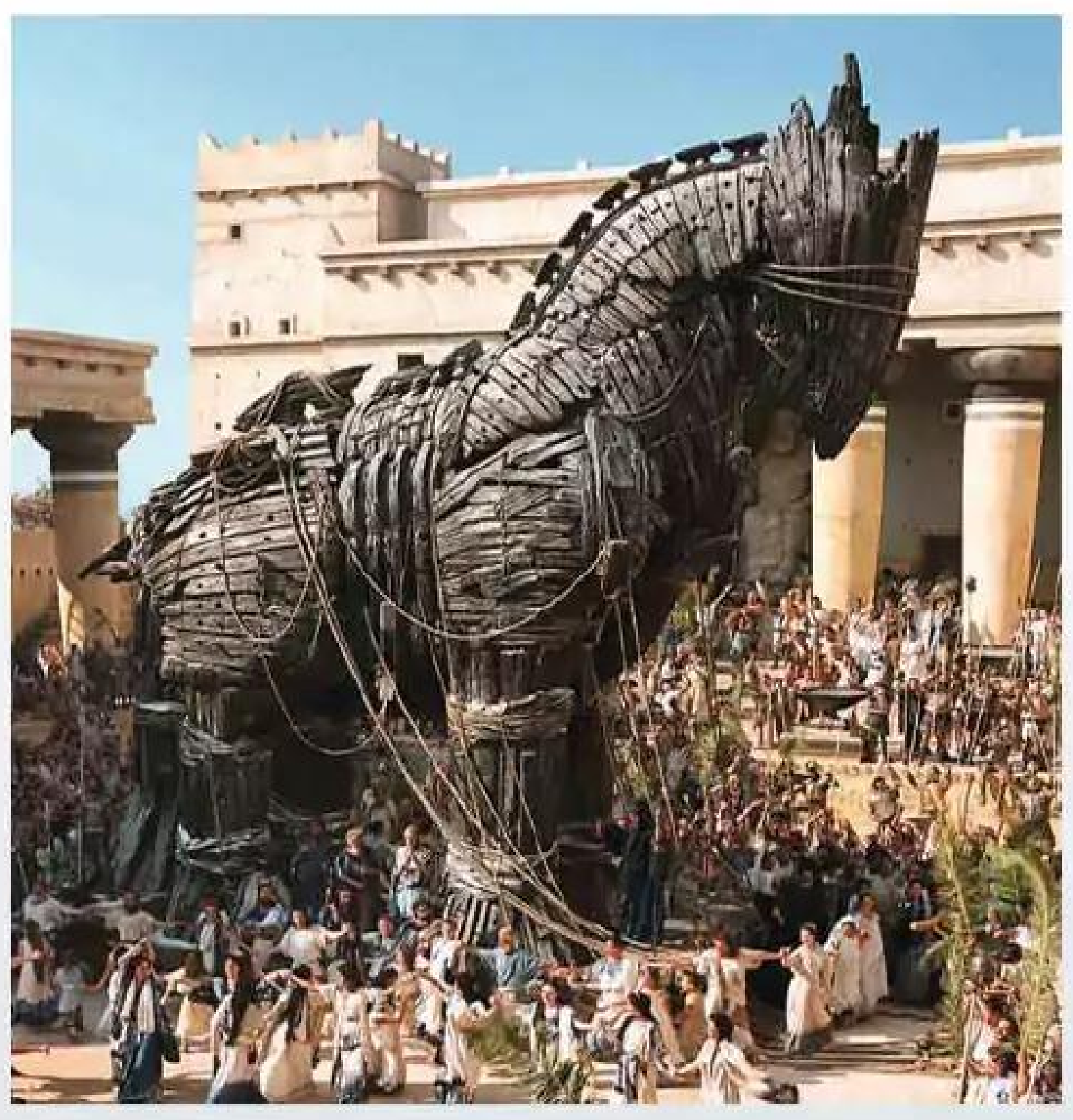

SNAPSHOTS

## 1899

## WITHOUT A LEG TO STAND ON

If you're thinking there is something 'off' about this image of the Great Sphinx of Giza from the end of the 19th century, you'd be right – its rear leg is nowhere to be seen. It's not lost, though. Unlike its lopped-off nose (it's still not known for certain who destroyed it) the mythical human-headed lion's hindquarter is merely buried under the sands of time – though that did make it much easier to climb, as this photo attests. These days, all four legs are on show, and the headdress has been repaired too.

GETTY IMAGES

## 1922

# TOMB RAIDER

When he first opened the tomb of Tutankhamun on 26 November 1922, British archaeologist Howard Carter was asked if he could see anything. With just a candle to pierce the gloom, he peered through the small crack he had made in the door and replied: "Yes, it is wonderful." That was the beginning of a massive, decade-long operation in the Valley of the Kings to catalogue and remove the trove of treasures buried with the Ancient Egyptian Pharaoh, all under Carter's direction. Here, he personally accompanies a bust as it is moved under armed guard to the new home of many of the priceless artefacts – Cairo's Egyptian Museum.

GETTY IMAGES X1

SNAPSHOTS

## 1967
## MONUMENTAL ENDEAVOUR

The construction of the Aswan High Dam near the border of Egypt and Sudan in the 1960s and 1970s posed a major threat to the region's ancient monuments. As the Nile's waters rose, they could have become submerged beneath a vast reservoir, Lake Nasser. Both nations sought Unesco's assistance, a prelude to the founding of the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia. This huge undertaking saw the excavation, preservation, dismantlement and relocation of several sites and treasures, including Ramesses II's iconic Abu Simbel temple seen here, a process completed by March 1980.

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PODCAST

**Professor Joyce Tyldesley discusses the pharaohs of ancient Egypt on the *HistoryExtra* podcast: *historyextra.com/pharaohs-qa***

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**HISTORICAL CONSULTANT FOR THIS MONTH'S ESSENTIAL GUIDE**

**JOYCE TYLDESLEY** is professor of Egyptology at the University of Manchester. Her most recent book is *Tutankhamun – Pharaoh, Icon, Enigma: Ten Tales of Egypt's Enduring King* (Headline, 2022)

# THE AGE OF THE PHARAOHS

## EARLY DYNASTIC PERIOD

c3000–2686 BC

**1st Dynasty:**
**c3000–2890 BC**

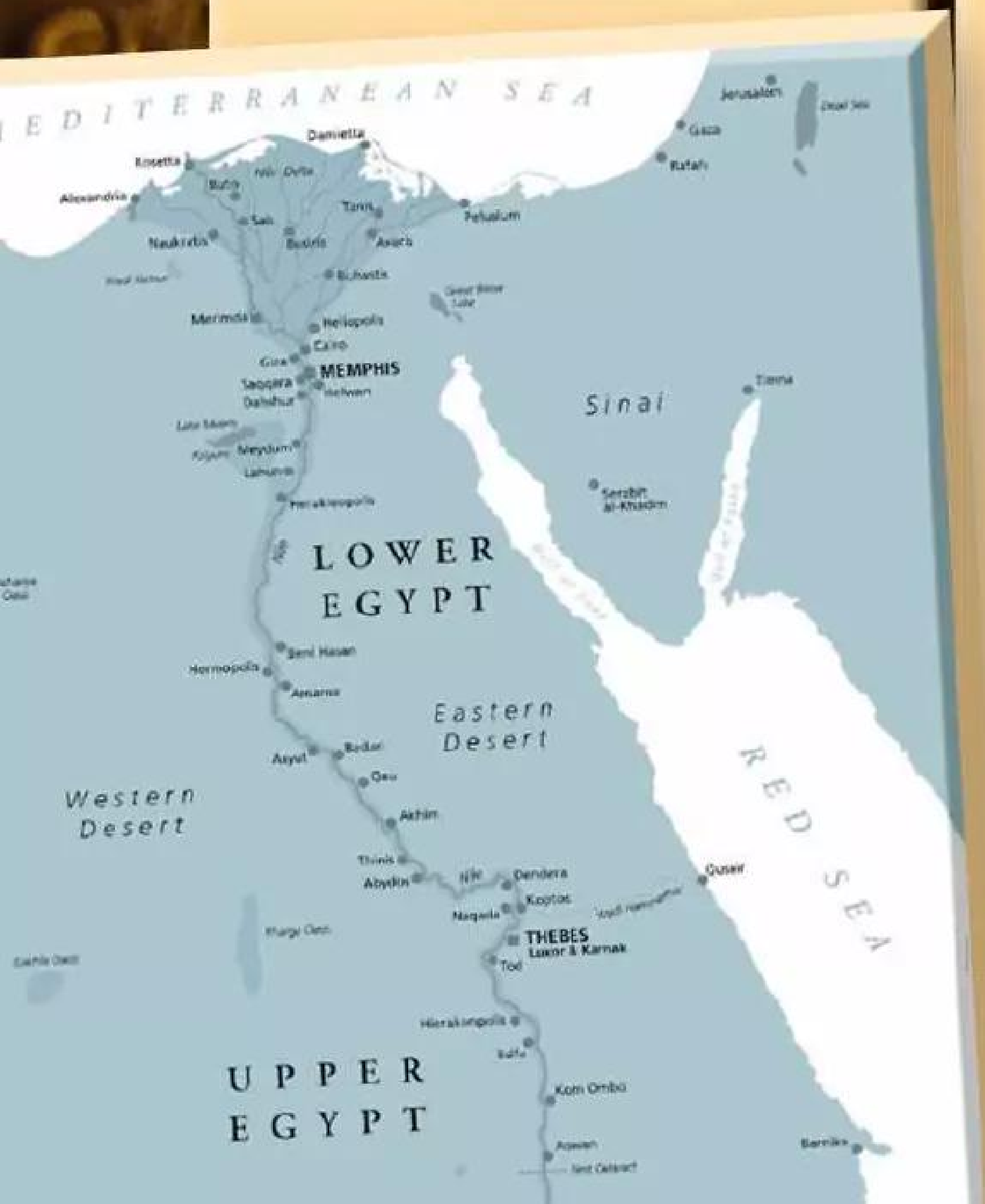
▼ First pharaoh: Aha (c3000 BC–unknown)
Last pharaoh: Qa'a (unknown–2890 BC)

**2nd Dynasty:**
**2890–2686 BC**

First pharaoh: Hetepsekhemwy (2890 BC–unknown)
Last pharaoh: Khasekhemwy (unknown–2686 BC)

**KEY INFO**

▼ The era directly following the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt in c3100 BC, the Early Dynastic Period sees a capital city established at Memphis.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Alexandria
Naukratis
Tanis
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Cairo
Giza
MEMPHIS
Saqqara
Dahshur
Helwan
Meydum
Herakleopolis
Jerusalem
Gaza
Rafah
Sinai
Serabit al-Khadim
LOWER EGYPT
Beni Hasan
Hermopolis
Amarna
Eastern Desert
Asyut
Badari
Qau
Akhim
Western Desert
Thinis
Abydos
Dendera
Koptos
Naqada
Quseir
THEBES
Luxor & Karnak
Tod
Hierakonpolis
Edfu
Kom Ombo
RED SEA
UPPER EGYPT
Aswan
Berenike

## OLD KINGDOM

2686–2160 BC

**3rd Dynasty:**
**2686–2613 BC**

First pharaoh: Nebka (2686–2667 BC)
Last pharaoh: Huni (2637–2613 BC)

**4th Dynasty:**
**2613–2494 BC**

First pharaoh: Sneferu (2613–2589 BC)
Last pharaoh: Shepseskaf (2503–2498 BC)

**5th Dynasty:**
**2494–2345 BC**

First pharaoh: Userkaf (2494–2487 BC)
Last pharaoh: Unas (2375–2345 BC)

**6th Dynasty:**
**2345–2181 BC**

First pharaoh: Teti (2345–2323 BC)
Last pharaoh: Nitiqret (2184–2181 BC)

**7th and 8th Dynasties:**
**2181–2160 BC**

Several ephemeral kings ruled in the 7th Dynasty, most of whom took the name of Neferkara – probably in imitation of the throne name of Pepy II (6th Dynasty, 2278–2184 BC). The short-lived 8th Dynasty was equally unstable and saw the collapse of the Old Kingdom system of control.

**KEY INFO**

The first true, flat-sided pyramids are built during the reign of Sneferu (founder of the 4th Dynasty), in place of the step pyramids commonly found in the 3rd Dynasty. Sneferu's son, Khufu (2589–2566 BC), builds the Great Pyramid of Giza, and the Great Sphinx follows, probably during the reign of Khafre (Khufu's son and successor, 2558–2532 BC), together with a second pyramid. The third pyramid at Giza is probably built during the reign of Khafre's successor, Menkaure (2532–2503 BC). Egypt splits into several political units after the 94-year reign of Pepy II (6th Dynasty).

## FIRST INTERMEDIATE PERIOD

2160–2055 BC

**9th and 10th Dynasties:**
**2160–2025 BC**

▲ First pharaoh: Khety (2160 BC–unknown)
Last pharaoh: Merykara (unknown –2025 BC)

**11th Dynasty (Thebes only):**
**2125–2055 BC**

First pharaoh: Intef I (2125–2112 BC)
Last pharaoh: Intef III (2063–2055 BC)

**KEY INFO**

Centralised power weakens during this period, and Egypt is ruled by two competing dynasties. One is based at Heracleopolis in the north, with the other based at Thebes in the south.

## MIDDLE KINGDOM

2055–1650 BC

**11th Dynasty (all Egypt):**
**2055–1985 BC**

First pharaoh: Mentuhotep II (2055–2004 BC)
Last pharaoh: Mentuhotep IV (1992–1985 BC)

**12th Dynasty:**
**1985–1773 BC**

First pharaoh: Amenemhat I (1985–1956 BC)
Last pharaoh: Queen Sobekneferu (1777–1773 BC)

**13th Dynasty:**
**1773–after 1650 BC**

First pharaoh: Wegaf (1773 BC–unknown)
Last pharaoh: Ay (exact dates unknown)

**14th Dynasty:**
**1773–1650 BC**

Believed to be minor rulers whose reigns were contemporary with the 13th or 15th Dynasties

**KEY INFO**

▼ Upper and Lower Egypt are reunified under Mentuhotep II (*pictured below*). Evidence indicates a shift in the pharaoh's role as political and spiritual leader during this period, as well as changes in the organisation of society, religious beliefs, and relations with neighbouring peoples. During the 12th Dynasty a new capital is established, at Idj Tawy.

## SECOND INTERMEDIATE PERIOD

1650–1550 BC

**15th Dynasty:**
**1650–1550 BC**

First pharaoh: Salitis/Sekerher (1650 BC–unknown)
Last pharaoh: Khamudi (exact dates unknown)

**16th Dynasty:**
**1650–1580 BC**

Theban rulers contemporary with 15th Dynasty

**17th Dynasty:**
**c1580–1550 BC**

First pharaoh: Rahotep (c1580 BC–unknown)
Last pharaoh: Kamose (1555–1550 BC)

**KEY INFO**

Egypt is once again ruled by competing dynasties, with the north ruled by the Hyksos – descendants of people from western Asia who had settled in the eastern Nile Delta – who ally with rulers of Kerma in Nubia against the Egyptian 16th Dynasty, based in Thebes.

GETTY IMAGES X6, ALAMY X4

*The dates used in this feature are derived from *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, edited by Ian Shaw (OUP, 2000). Please note that dates will vary between different sources.

# We chart nearly 3,000 years of pharaonic rule – from the reigning dynasties, to key moments in ancient Egyptian history

## NEW KINGDOM

**1550–1069 BC**

**◀ 18th Dynasty: 1550–1295 BC**

First pharaoh: Ahmose I (1550–1525 BC)
Last pharaoh: Horemheb (1323–1295 BC)

## RAMESSIDE PERIOD

**1295–1069 BC**

**19th Dynasty: 1295–1186 BC**

First pharaoh: Ramesses I (1295–1294 BC)
Last pharaoh: Queen Tausret (1188–1186 BC)

**20th Dynasty: 1186–1069 BC**

First pharaoh: Sethnakht (1186–1184 BC)
Last pharaoh: Ramesses XI (1099–1069 BC)

### KEY INFO

▼ Ahmose I drives the Hyksos from the Delta and reunites Egypt, ushering in nearly 500 years of political and economic stability. The following Ramesside period is a high point in Egyptian history, with great building projects – particularly during the 1279–1213 BC rule of Ramesses II (*pictured below*) – and conquests in Syria, Libya and Nubia.

## THIRD INTERMEDIATE PERIOD

**1069–664 BC**

**21st Dynasty: 1069–945 BC**

First pharaoh: Smendes (1069–1043 BC)
Last pharaoh: Psusennes II (959–945 BC)

**22nd Dynasty: 945–715 BC**

First pharaoh: Sheshonq I (945–924 BC)
Last pharaoh: Osorkon IV (unknown–715 BC)

**23rd Dynasty: 818–715 BC (contemporary with late 22nd, 24th and early 25th dynasties)**

Pharaohs include:
Pedubastis I
Takelot III
Iuput II

**24th Dynasty: 727–715 BC**

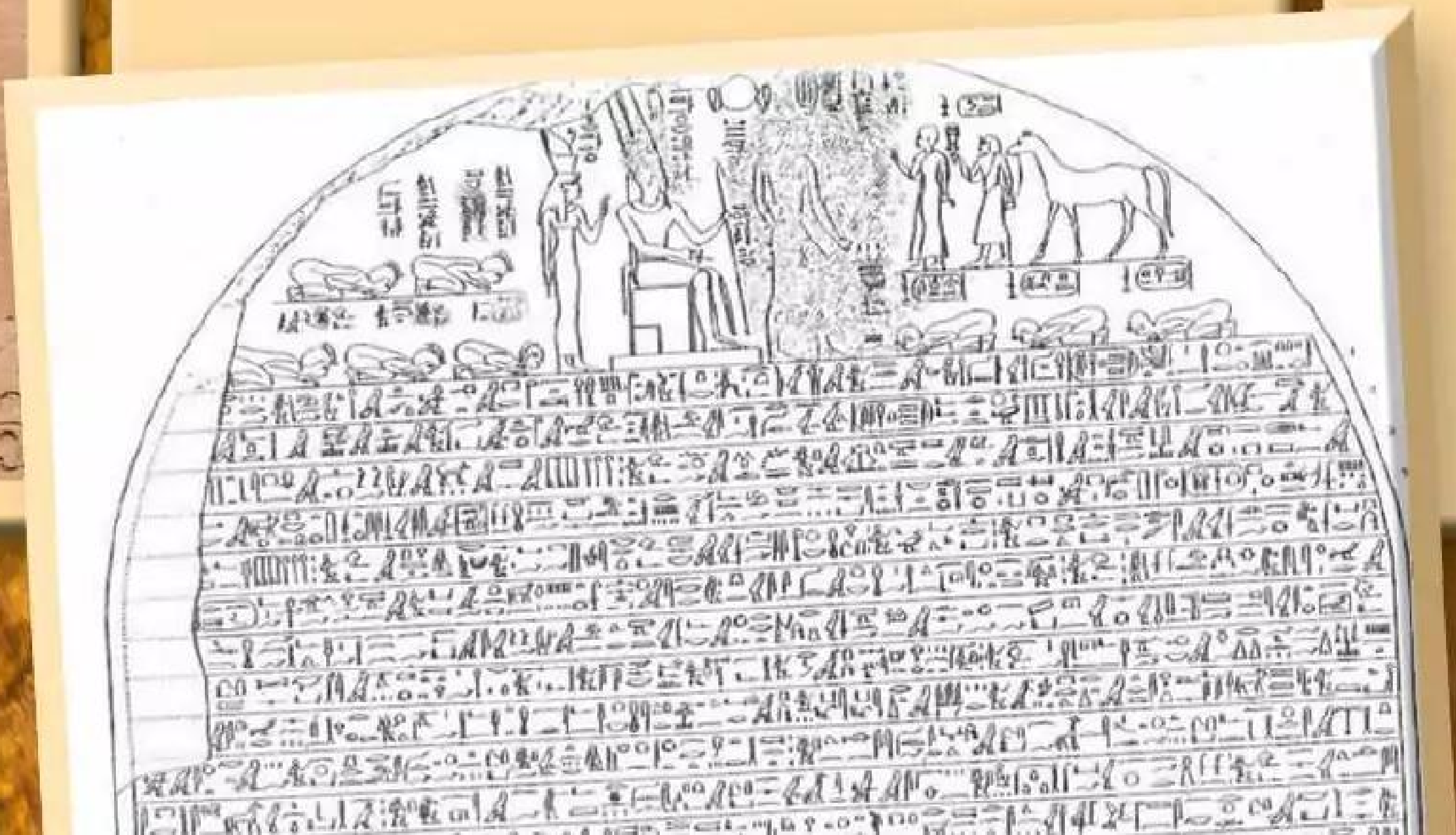
Known pharaoh: Bakenrenef (720–715 BC)

**25th Dynasty: 747–656 BC**

First pharaoh: Piy (747–716 BC)
Last pharaoh: Tanutamani (664–656 BC)

### KEY INFO

▼ The death of Ramesses XI in 1069 BC sees Egypt descend into some 400 years of politically divided rule, with various centres of power and a loss of control over Nubia (Kush) in the south, which is ruled by an independent dynasty in the mid-eighth century BC. In the late eighth century BC, the Kushite ruler Piy (*whose victory stele is pictured below*), invades Egypt and lays the foundations for the 25th Dynasty.



## LATE PERIOD

**664–332 BC**

**26th Dynasty: 664–525 BC**

First pharaoh: Psamtek I (664–610 BC)
Last pharaoh: Psamtek III (526–525 BC)

**27th Dynasty (1st Persian Period): 525–404 BC**

First pharaoh: Cambyses (525–522 BC)
Last pharaoh: Artaxerxes II (405–359 BC)

**28th Dynasty: 404–399 BC**

Only pharaoh: Amyrtaios (404–399 BC)

**29th Dynasty: 399–380 BC**

First pharaoh: Nepherites I (399–393 BC)
Last pharaoh: Nepherites II (c380 BC)

**30th Dynasty: 380–343 BC**

First pharaoh: Nectanebo I (380–362 BC)
Last pharaoh: Nectanebo II (360–343 BC)

**2nd Persian Period: 343–332 BC**

First pharaoh: Artaxerxes III Ochus (343–338 BC)
Last pharaoh: Darius III Codoman (336–332 BC)

### KEY INFO

Egypt sees considerable turmoil with foreign powers threatening throughout the period. In 525 BC, the Achaemenid Persian empire invades for the first time but will be ousted by Alexander the Great in 332 BC. ⊙ **WORDS: CHARLOTTE HODGMAN**

## PTOLEMAIC PERIOD

**332–30 BC**

**Macedonian Dynasty: 332–305 BC**

First pharaoh: Alexander the Great (332–323 BC)
Last pharaoh: Alexander IV (317–310 BC, nominal ruler 310–305 BC)

**Ptolemaic Dynasty: 305 BC–30 AD**

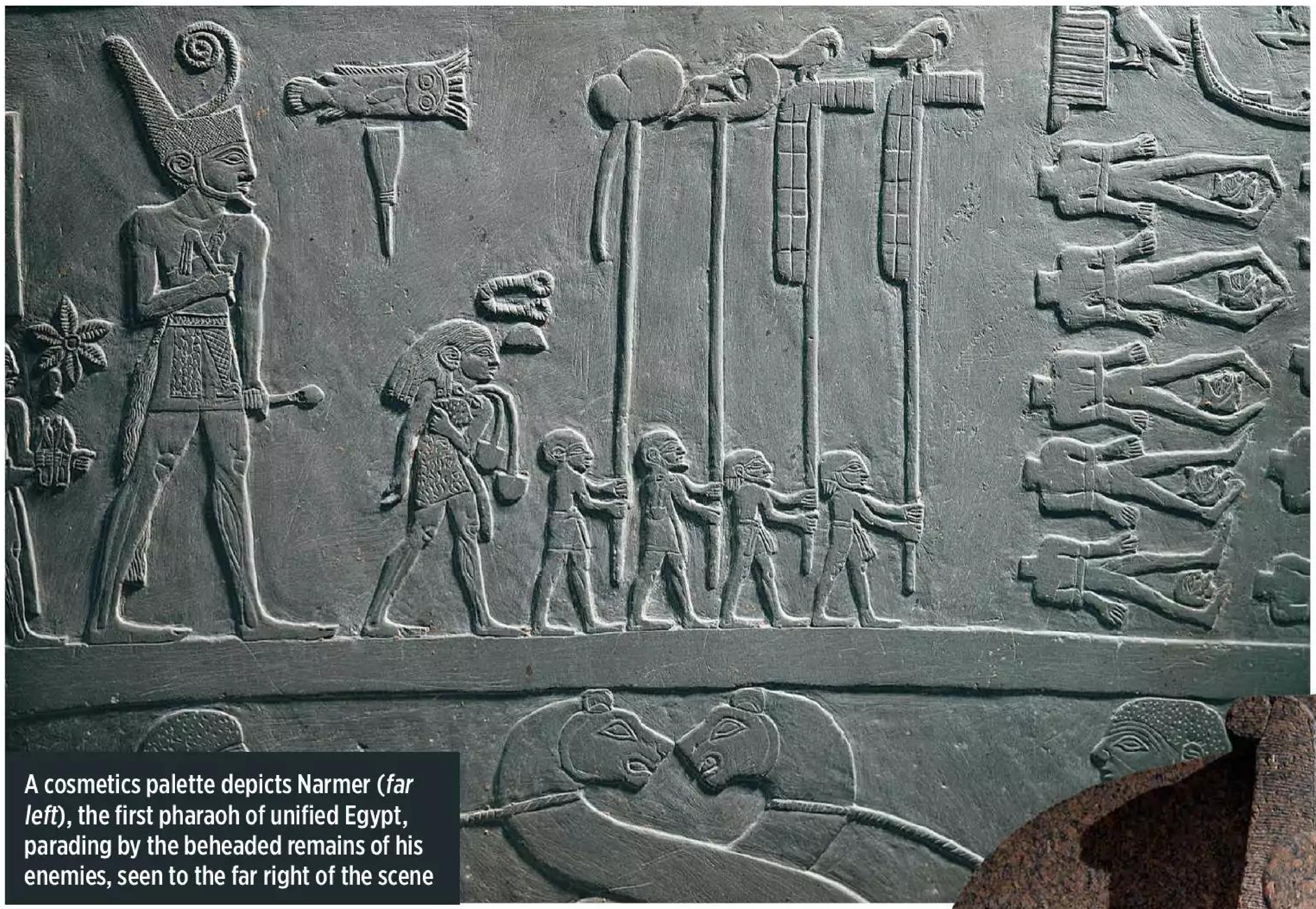
First pharaoh: Ptolemy I Soter (305–285 BC)
Last pharaoh: Ptolemy XV Caesarion (44–30 BC)

### KEY INFO

▼ After Alexander the Great's death, rule passes to one of his generals, Ptolemy. Antony and Cleopatra's defeat at Actium by Octavian (future Roman Emperor Augustus) in 31 BC is followed by the murder of Egypt's last pharaoh, Cleopatra's son Caesarion (*pictured with his mother, below*), the following year.Et harum qui

# EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT EGYPTIAN PHARAOHS

**Professor Joyce Tyldesley** answers key questions about Egypt's ancient rulers and the power they wielded



A cosmetics palette depicts Narmer (*far left*), the first pharaoh of unified Egypt, parading by the beheaded remains of his enemies, seen to the far right of the scene

### **Q:** What does the word 'pharaoh' mean and when was it first used?

**A:** It comes from the ancient Egyptian for 'great house', but what it actually means is 'king'. And it's a word that today we use to describe ancient kings of Egypt, but the Egyptians themselves didn't always use it.

### **Q:** When did the era of the Egyptian pharaohs begin?

**A:** The first person we can really say ruled all of Egypt was Narmer in about 3100 BC. Before that, the land we now know as Egypt was made up of independent cities and satellite communities along the Nile and in the Nile Delta. So, the era of the pharaohs can really be seen to have begun with political unification of the country and continued to the reign of Cleopatra, who died in 30 BC. And there was never any real determination to break away from having a king, or pharaoh, of Egypt during this time.

### **Q:** How many pharaohs ruled Egypt between c3100 BC and 30 BC?

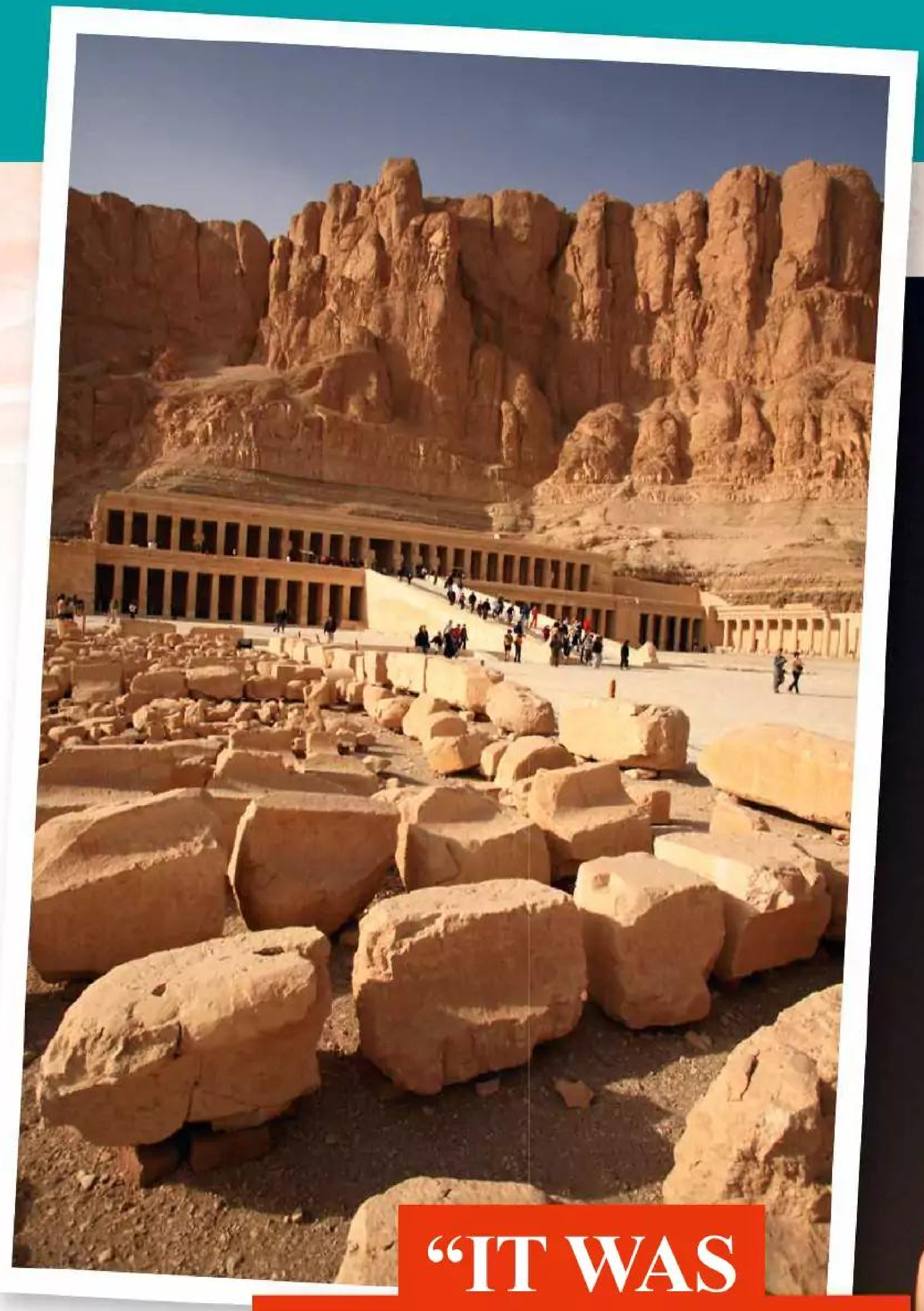
**A:** It's very difficult to tell. For some periods, we have really good records, but for other periods we don't have any records at all, so it's very hard to trace king after king. What's more, during the times when Egypt was split into two separate kingdoms, there were two rival pharaohs on the throne at the same time, which also confuses things. And there were also occasions when kings ruled together, as well as regencies. But I would say there were probably at least 300 pharaohs during this period, possibly more, although they were not all from the same family line.

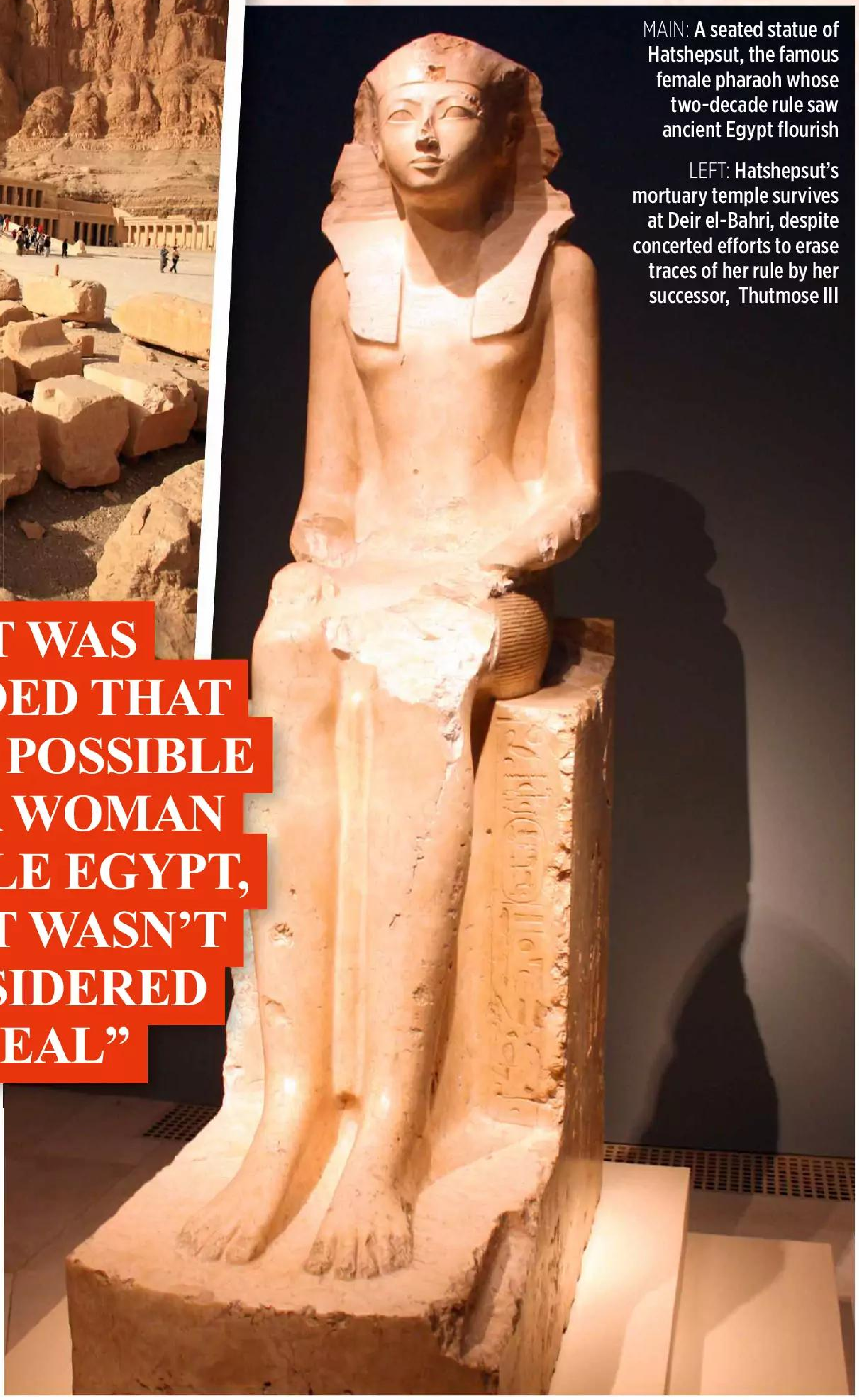
### **Q:** Why did the pharaonic era last so long?

**A:** I think it's because the pharaohs told everybody that they were indispensable and were the only people in Egypt who could communicate with the gods. The gods were everything to the ancient Egyptians, so if you can convince the people that you are the one person who can talk to them and

GETTY IMAGES X4, ALAMY X2

keep them happy, then it's very unlikely that they will try and get rid of you. We do know of pharaohs who were assassinated, such as Ramesses III in 1153 BC, but it didn't happen very often. And there was never a move to replace a king with a democratic system of rule. I think the ancient Egyptians just couldn't imagine life without a pharaoh; even their afterlife was ruled by a king – Osiris.





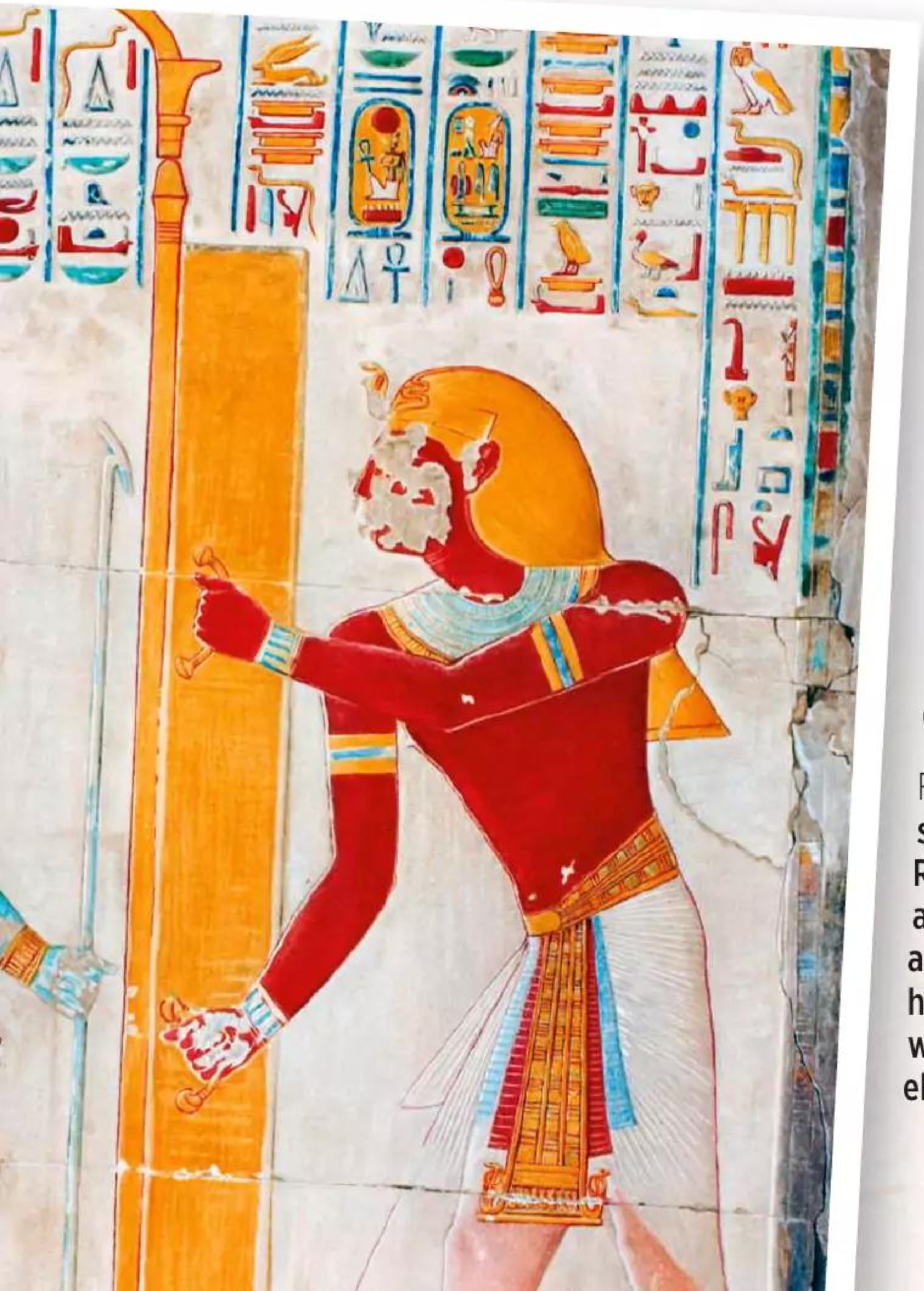
MAIN: **A seated statue of Hatshepsut, the famous female pharaoh whose two-decade rule saw ancient Egypt flourish**

LEFT: **Hatshepsut's mortuary temple survives at Deir el-Bahri, despite concerted efforts to erase traces of her rule by her successor, Thutmose III**

> **"IT WAS DECIDED THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE FOR A WOMAN TO RULE EGYPT, BUT IT WASN'T CONSIDERED IDEAL"**

### Q: How did ancient Egyptians feel about being ruled by a female pharaoh?

**A:** It was decided, right at the start of the dynastic age, that it was possible for a woman to rule Egypt, but it wasn't considered an ideal situation. It was preferable for rule to pass from pharaoh to son, or to another male who had been adopted and who had assumed the role of son. But occasionally, where there was no obvious male successor, it was necessary for a woman to rule. This only happened a few times, and during their reigns, female pharaohs were accepted. Hatshepsut, for example, who is the female pharaoh most people know about, was on the throne for about 20 years and Egypt seems to have flourished during her reign. But after she had died, she wasn't looked upon so kindly and was pretty much cut out of history by her successor. If it wasn't for her magnificent temple at Deir el-Bahri, we wouldn't know much about her. But during their actual reigns, people didn't seem to have a problem with being ruled by a female pharaoh.



LEFT: **Even the afterlife was ruled by a king. Here, a copy of a wall painting shows Sety I (r1294-1279 BC) opening the door for Osiris, lord of the dead**

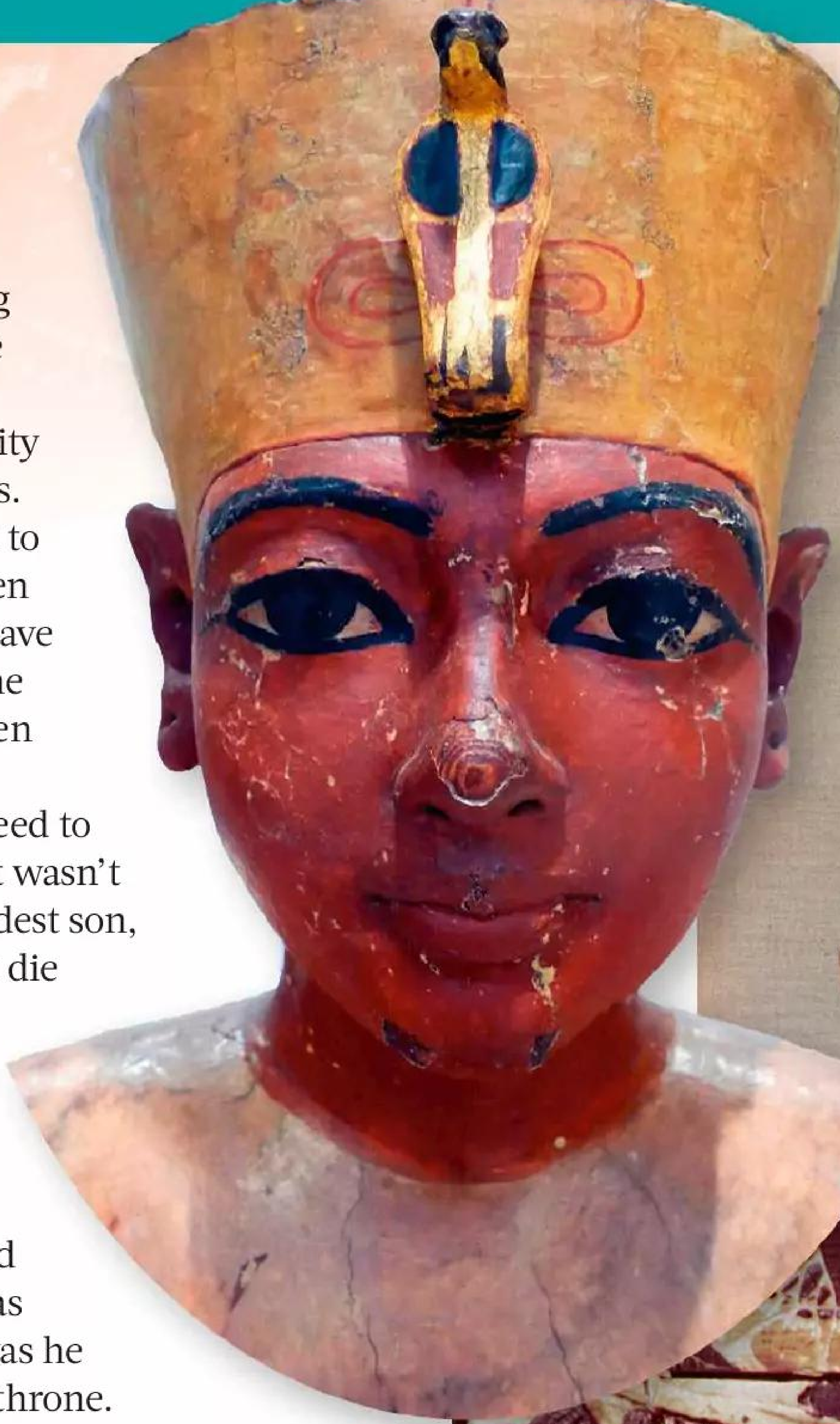
FAR LEFT: **The sarcophagus lid of Ramesses III, who was assassinated in 1155 BC as part of a plot led by his secondary wife, Tiye, who wanted to place her eldest son on the throne**

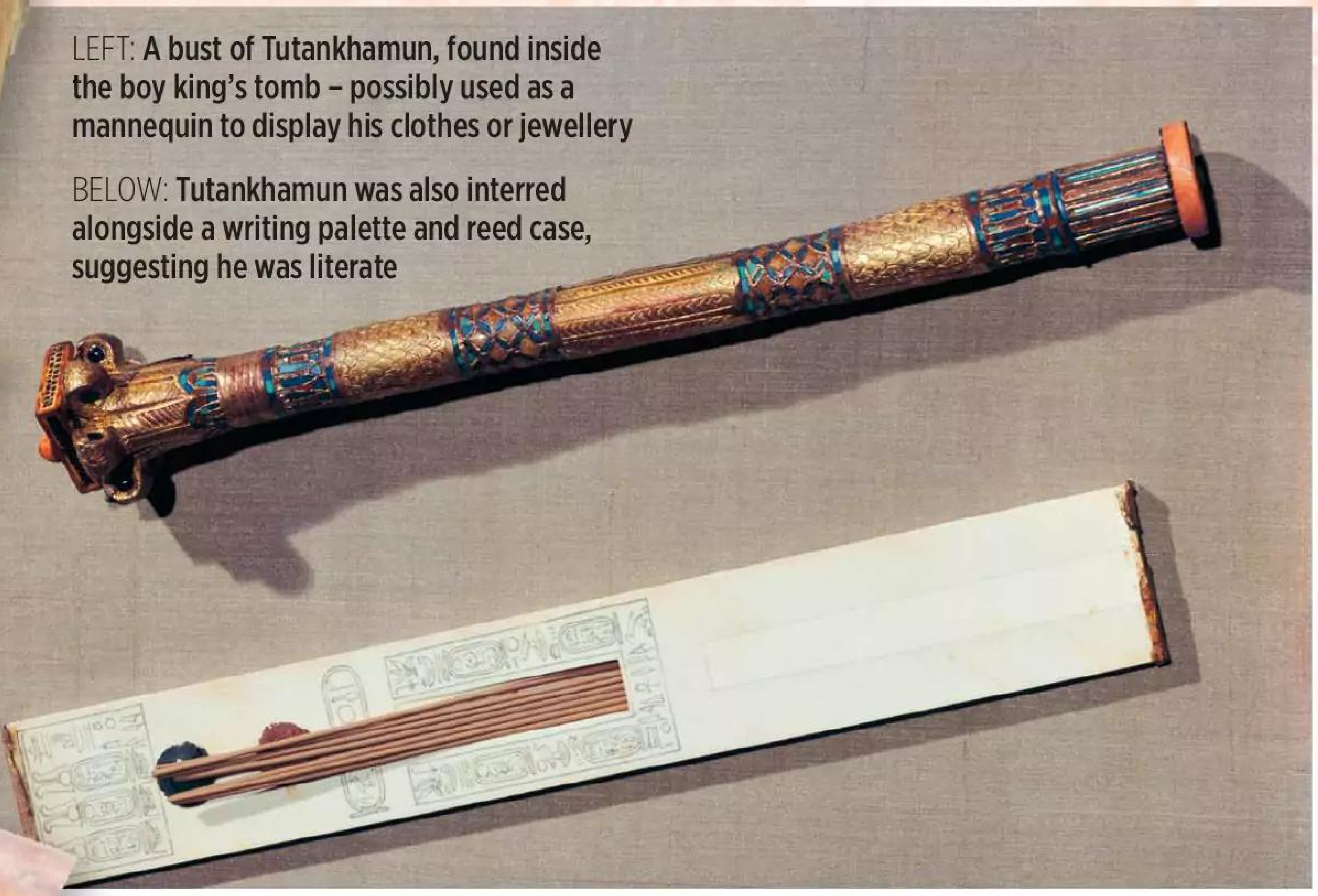
Once you had been crowned king, it didn't matter who you were before; the act of being crowned meant that you would be acceptable to the people from that point onwards. There was no going back once you'd been proclaimed king. This is why we tend to use the title 'female pharaoh' or 'female king' rather than 'queen', which has very different meanings when used in a modern, English context. When we're discussing ancient Egypt, we're not just talking about a strong ruling queen, we're talking about a woman who has taken that extra step and become the king.

### Q: What training did future pharaohs have to undertake?

**A:** It's difficult to know for sure, but we do have some indications; we know that some kings were trained in military arts, for example. Tutankhamun had writing palettes in his tomb, so we think that he was trained in reading and writing as well. And it seems that there was a system of tutors who were attached to the royal palace. The problem was, though, ▶

◀ that no one was ever certain who the next king would be because there were such high child mortality rates in those days. Several sons born to the king and queen would probably have been trained in the same way, and then eventually one of them would succeed to the throne. And it wasn't necessarily the eldest son, because he might die before he got to the throne. Tutankhamun probably had an elder brother, but he was trained just in case. And as it turned out, it was he who came to the throne.





LEFT: **A bust of Tutankhamun, found inside the boy king's tomb – possibly used as a mannequin to display his clothes or jewellery**

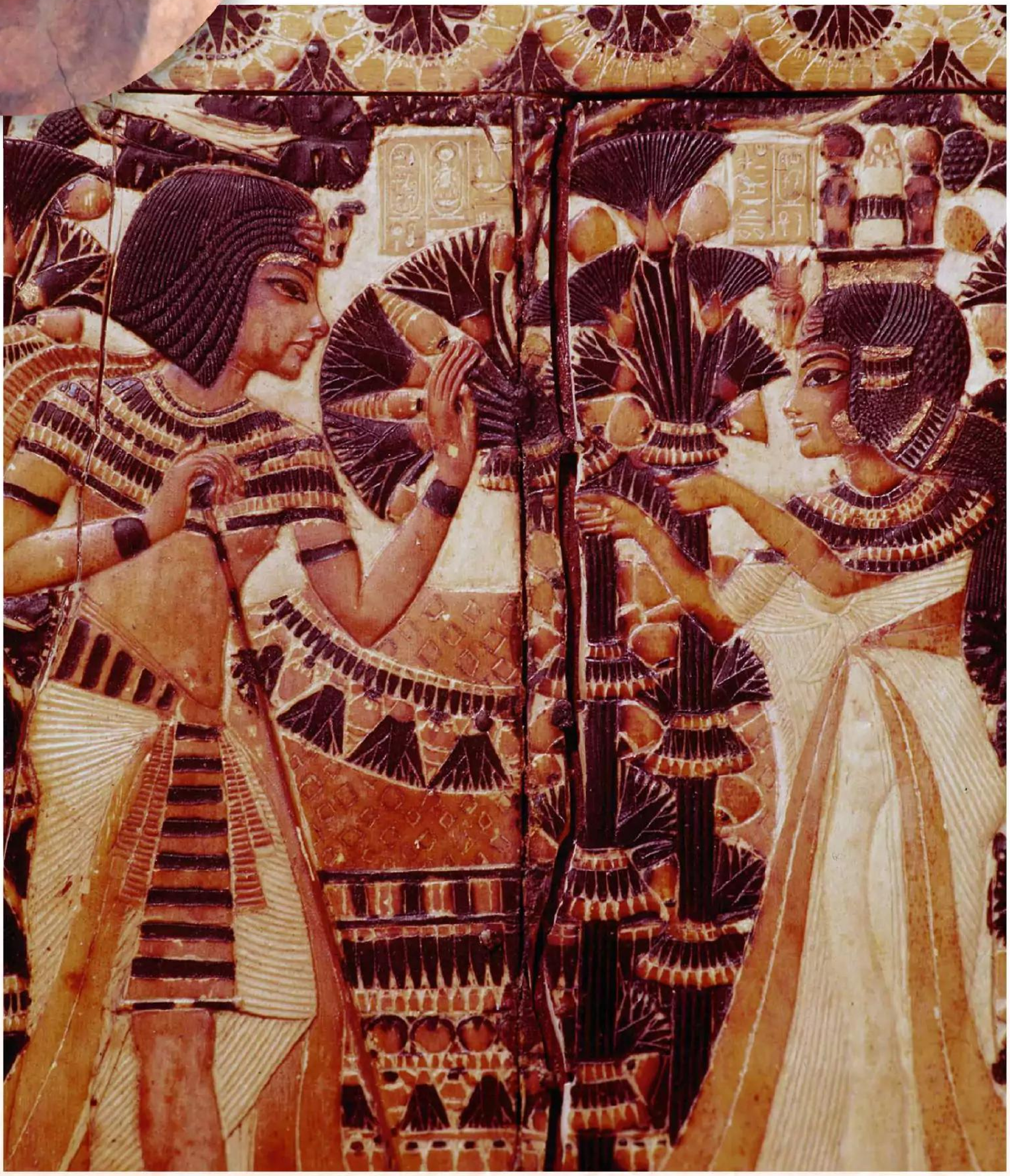
BELOW: **Tutankhamun was also interred alongside a writing palette and reed case, suggesting he was literate**

## Q: How did royal marriages work?

**A:** Most 'ordinary' Egyptians during the dynastic age only had one husband or wife at a time. But the royal family was different, and the pharaoh had many wives, one of whom was his chief wife. It was his children with the chief wife who usually continued the royal line. In addition, pharaohs also had harems of wives, among them foreign-born princesses who were sent to Egypt to marry the pharaoh and create a bond with their home country. Interestingly, there's no evidence that Egyptian princesses married outside Egypt, probably because Egypt was the dominant nation at the time. We even have letters from foreign kings pleading to be sent an Egyptian bride as a sort of reciprocal bride for the sister or daughter that they had sent to Egypt. But it just didn't happen.

There were also Egyptian-born women in the pharaoh's harem, who, it's to be assumed, were just picked because the king wanted to marry them. We're absolutely certain that pharaohs married their sisters and half-sisters, so there might well have been some of the king's sisters in his harem as well. But sibling marriages weren't compulsory: Tutankhamun, for example, married his sister or half-sister, but his father, Akhenaten, didn't.

There are several theories about why a pharaoh might have chosen to marry his sister. One is that it cut down the number of relations the king had, since he wouldn't have any in-laws; there



**The lid of a casket depicts Tutankhamun in a garden with his wife (and also sister) Ankhesenamun**

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would be no rival family vying for the throne. It also meant that the queen would be very loyal to the royal family since it would be her own as well. Plus, she could also be trained for the role from childhood.

The first people who translated texts containing information about pharaohs marrying their sisters tended to be western, strongly Christian, scholars who were very shocked by it and sought explanations for why these marriages took place. They came up with a theory that the kingship, the pharaohship if you like, was passed down through royal women. So to become a true pharaoh of Egypt, you had to marry the heiress who carried this kingship within her. It's a theory that developed because people were so uncomfortable with the idea of intermarriage – but there were plenty of pharaohs who didn't marry their sisters and yet were perfectly successful rulers, so it's not correct.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**WATERWAY TO GET AROUND**

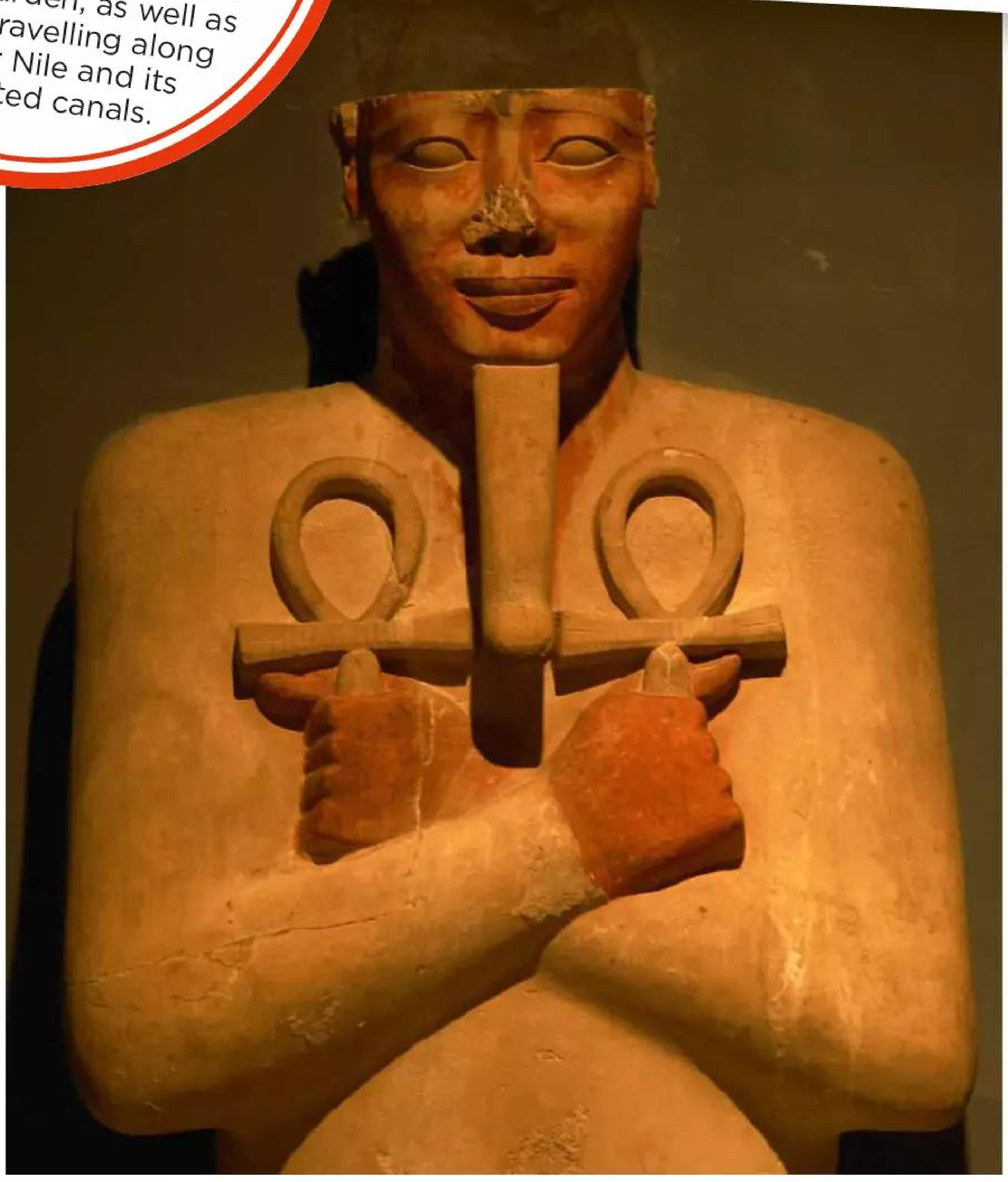
The camel was not used regularly in Egypt until the very end of the dynastic age. Instead, the ancient Egyptians used donkeys as beasts of burden, as well as boats for travelling along the River Nile and its associated canals.

## Q: Why are pharaohs usually depicted with a beard?

**A:** It's something we can see right from the start of the pharaonic age. We have images of Narmer, Egypt's first ruling pharaoh, wearing a false beard; we know it's false because it clips on and is tied to the face. Even the female pharaoh Hatshepsut is depicted wearing a false beard, so it was clearly symbolic and intended as a representation of kingship. Presumably on occasions when they performed rituals, pharaohs would have worn a beard, just as they would have worn a crown, and carried a crook and flail. They were all attributes of kingship and, interestingly they all continued right the way through to the end of the pharaonic age – the Egyptians never really diverged from their original ideal of kingship. It's a system that must have worked very well – even now, with most people unable to read their writing, it's not hard to pick out the figure of the pharaoh in ancient Egyptian art.

## Q: What impact could pharaohs have on religion?

**A:** It's important not to fall into the trap of saying that ancient Egypt had a religion. It was more like a lot of cults coexisting at the same time. There was nothing resembling a Bible or anything similar to that, and there was no religious code that you had to stick to.



ABOVE: **A pillar statue of Senusret I (r1956–1911 BC), complete with the 'beard' associated with images of Egyptian pharaohs**

TOP: **The temples at the Abydos necropolis, where early pharaohs were buried, includes numerous painted panels. Here, an individual is shown worshipping the god Osiris**

But there were state temples with state gods, and these state gods were dependent on the king for regular offerings. Obviously, the pharaoh couldn't make every offering himself, so he had priests who did it for him, but technically he was the head of every religious cult.

Ordinary Egyptians didn't have much to do with this state religion and were more likely to worship local, smaller gods and demigods in their own temples, such as gods associated with childbirth and health. The division between the state temples and the deities worshipped by the ordinary people was pretty big. We shouldn't assume that Egyptians worshipped at the big state temples like Karnak, because they didn't. The king went there, and so did his priests, to make offerings to the gods, but ordinary people only had contact with state gods when those gods processed out of the temples. It was the pharaoh who maintained the relationship with the gods and was responsible for keeping them happy.

## Q: Were slaves and servants really buried alive in the pyramids alongside their deceased pharaoh, as Hollywood would often have us believe?

**A:** No. Certainly, a lot of people were involved in building the pyramids, but it was a type of national service; they were summoned from villages and towns all over Egypt. They went to the pyramid building site, worked on the pyramid for perhaps three or four months and then went home again and another batch of people came in to take their place. There was a stage before the pyramid building, right at the beginning of the dynastic age, when pharaohs were buried at a place called the Abydos. And we can see that, round the royal mudbrick tombs, there were people who seem to have been buried at the same time as the king, because the burials have the same roof. So, it's possible that very early in the pharaonic age, some kings were buried with retainers who might have either been killed or who killed themselves to accompany the king on his journey to the afterlife. But this was a very short-lived phenomenon and certainly, by the time you get to the age of the pyramids, there's no suggestion at all that was still happening.

**INTERVIEW: EMILY BRIFFETT**

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**JOYCE TYLDESLEY** is professor of Egyptology at the University of Manchester. Her most recent book is *Tutankhamun – Pharaoh, Icon, Enigma: Ten Tales of Egypt's Enduring King* (Headline, 2022)

# EGYPT'S MOST POWERFUL WOMEN

Men weren't the only people to help shape one of the most remarkable civilisations of the ancient world

## SOBEKNEFERU

ruled 1777–1773 BC

▼ Though it has been proposed that women did rule Egypt before the 12th Dynasty, Sobekneferu was the first female pharaoh of ancient Egypt to be confirmed by archaeological evidence.

Among a small collection of surviving sources to bear her name and royal titles is a cylindrical seal made of steatite, now housed in the British Museum. She acceded to rule at the end of the 12th Dynasty, after the death of her brother, Amenemhat IV, who died without a suitable male heir.

Unlike Hatshepsut – a woman who later adopted the appearance of a traditional male king (*see opposite page*) – Sobekneferu alternated traditional female clothing with royal attire and regalia, creating a composite gender image that can be seen in her few surviving statues. It has been suggested that the pharaoh may have used this deliberate ambiguity as a way to combat critics of her position based on her sex.

Though very little is known about Sobekneferu's nearly four-year rule, some experts believe that she oversaw the building of a pyramid in Mazghuna, in the northern region of modern Egypt.

LEFT: **A headless bust of Sobekneferu, now on display at the Louvre Museum in Paris**

BELOW: **The only known statue of Sobekneferu with the head intact was destroyed during World War II – only photographs remain**

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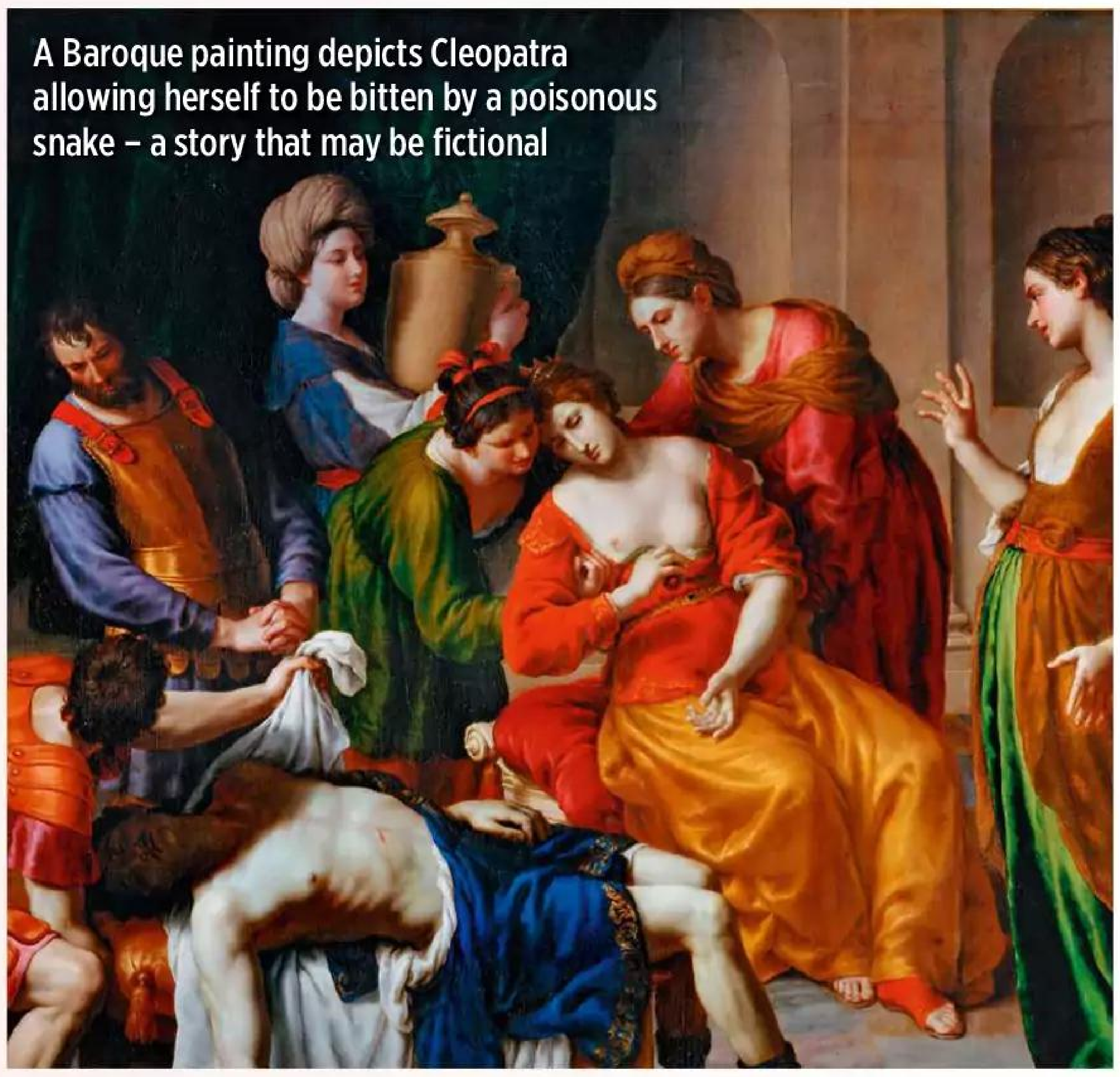


A Baroque painting depicts Cleopatra allowing herself to be bitten by a poisonous snake – a story that may be fictional

## CLEOPATRA

ruled 51–30 BC

▲ The ruler known to history simply as 'Cleopatra' was actually the seventh queen of that name. Like Nefertiti (*see opposite page*), Cleopatra's modern reputation is dominated by myths of her great beauty, but there is also much evidence to suggest that she was highly intelligent, a skilled scholar and a shrewd politician; she was the first Ptolemaic ruler to learn Egyptian in addition to Greek, and she spoke seven other languages.

At the age of 18, she was made co-regent with her brother Ptolemy XIII, at a time when the capital Alexandria was a thriving cultural centre. Soon, Cleopatra had become the dominant ruler and courted Roman support for her regime, leading to her famed relationships with Roman statesman Julius Caesar and, later, Roman general Mark Antony; she had children by both men. During her rule, she built wealth and resources, and displayed political acumen to consolidate her power. Though after Caesar's assassination, opposing Roman powers would prove too strong.

Cleopatra died in 30 BC after defeat at the battle of Actium the previous year, with some stories claiming that she chose to be bitten by a poisonous snake rather than face humiliation and mistreatment at the hands of the victorious Octavian, the future Roman Emperor Augustus. It's one of many myths that surround Cleopatra's legacy, though what's surely certain is that she was much more than the lascivious beauty depicted in Roman propaganda.

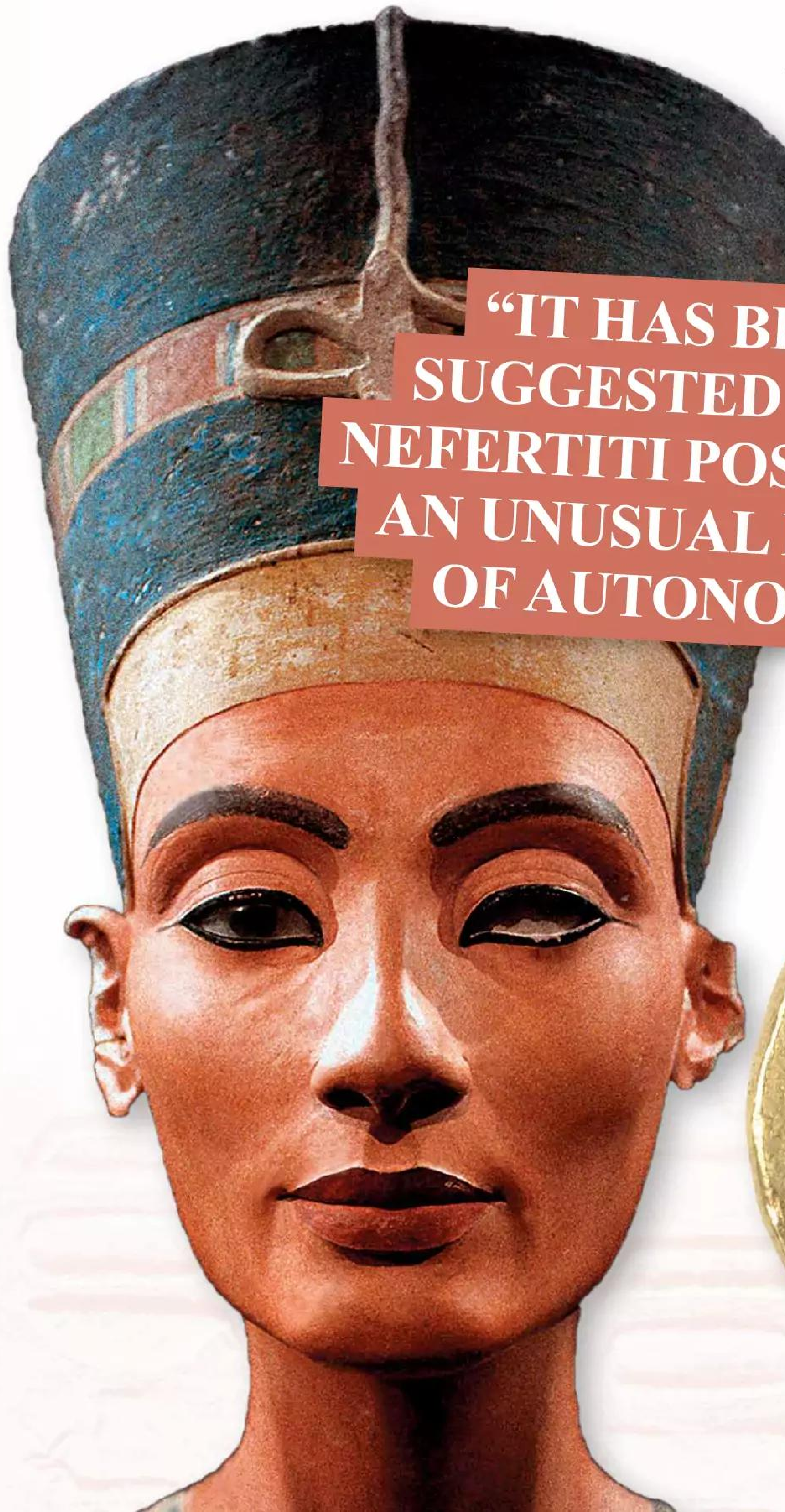
## NEFERTITI

queen of Akhenaten, who ruled 1352–1336 BC

▼ One of the most familiar faces of ancient Egypt, the 14th-century BC bust of Nefertiti shown below (now residing in Neues Museum in Berlin) has led to her reputation as a figure of ancient glamour and beauty. But some experts also believe that Nefertiti wielded the same kingly powers as her husband, Akhenaten (*see page 35*), and may even have succeeded him as the sole ruler after his death.

Her high position in Akhenaten's court ran alongside radical religious reform, as Akhenaten and Nefertiti sought to divert the polytheistic religious practices of 14th-century BC Egypt, instead promoting the worship of a single god: the sun disk, called the Aten. Due to depictions of Nefertiti making offerings to the Aten without her husband, it has been suggested that she possessed an unusual level of autonomy.

For many years, it was widely accepted that Nefertiti had died as Akhenaten's queen. But recent interpretations of inscriptions on Akhenaten's tomb, and of jewellery found in the tomb of Tutankhamun that had been made for his (alleged) father Akhenaten's co-ruler, have led some scholars to conclude that Nefertiti was a shortened version of a co-ruler called Neferneferuaten, who ruled for several years in their own right after Akhenaten's death.



The bust of Nefertiti held by the Neues Museum in Berlin – arguably one of the most famous ancient Egyptian artefacts in the world

> **"IT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED THAT NEFERTITI POSSESSED AN UNUSUAL LEVEL OF AUTONOMY"**

## HATSHEPSUT

ruled 1473–1458 BC

◀ With a name that translates as 'foremost of noblewomen', Hatshepsut is one of the most significant female rulers of ancient Egypt. She is often hailed as one of the most politically minded pharaohs and oversaw the construction of some of Egypt's most famous buildings, including the temple of Deir el-Bahri. Historians were unaware of her until the 19th century, as her stepson and successor Thutmose III ordered virtually all traces of her rule to be destroyed.

## TAUSRET

ruled 1188–1186 BC

◀ Tausret was the last pharaoh of the 19th Dynasty, and one of only two female rulers thought to have been buried in Egypt's renowned Valley of the Kings, where a cache of jewellery purportedly belonging to her (*including the necklace shown left*) was discovered in 1908. There is evidence to confirm that she was the consort of Pharaoh Sety II, and possibly also a descendant of Ramesses II, placing her high in the ruling class of the time. Artefacts bearing her name have been found as far away as Lebanon, indicating the potential span and impact of her rule.

## ARSINOE II

queen of Ptolemy II, who ruled 285–246 BC

▼ When the third-century BC pharaoh Ptolemy II found himself in a need of a queen, he revived an old Egyptian royal tradition by marrying his sister, Arsinoe. Despite only being queen for a relatively short period (around five to seven years), Arsinoe II proved highly influential, and after her death, she was deified by her husband.

Statues of Arsinoe II were placed in all of Egypt's major temples so that they could be worshipped alongside the traditional deities, and her cult later flourished in Alexandria during the Roman period. ⊙

**WORDS: ELINOR EVANS**

A coin bearing Arsinoe II's image, issued by her brother (and husband) Ptolemy II

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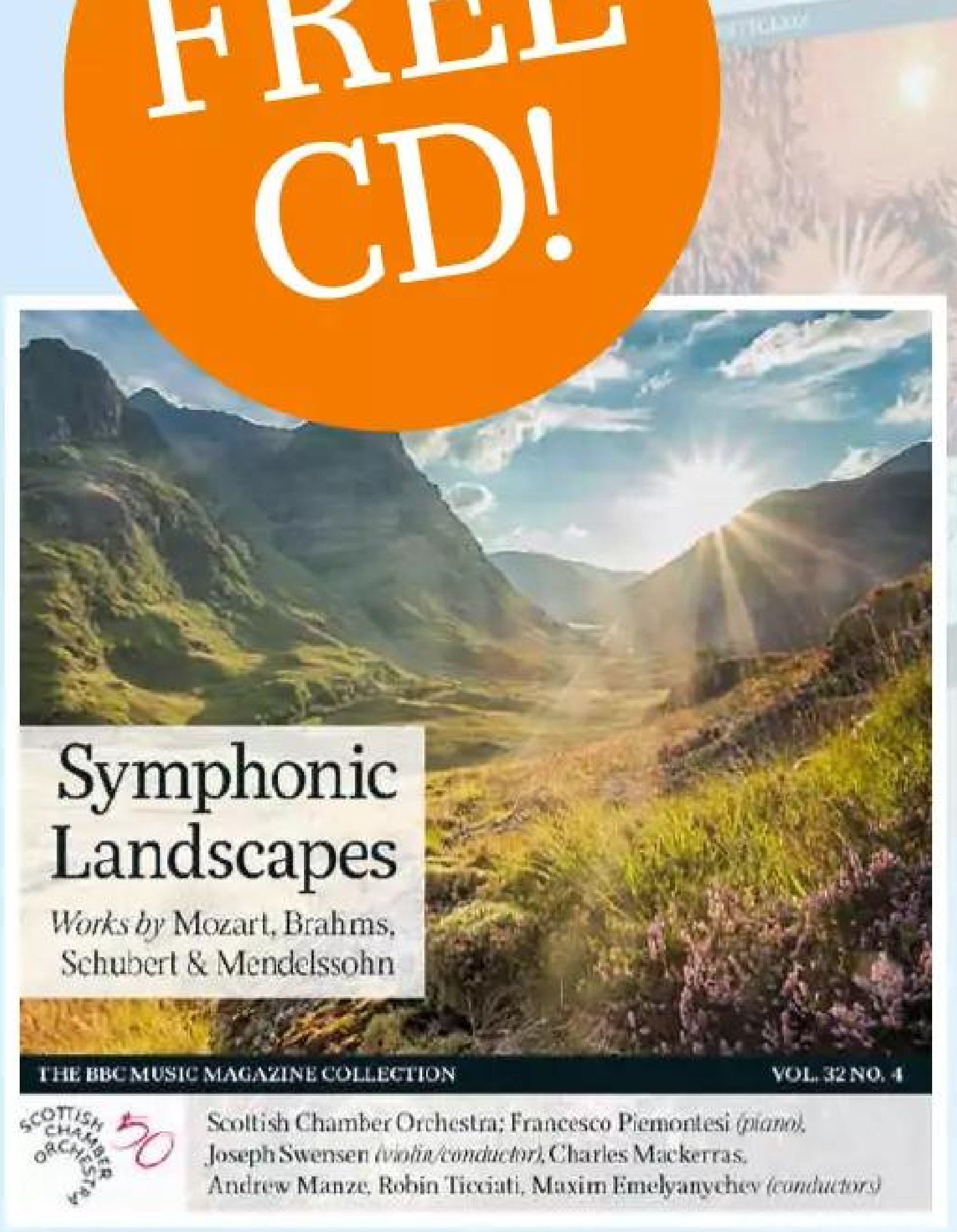
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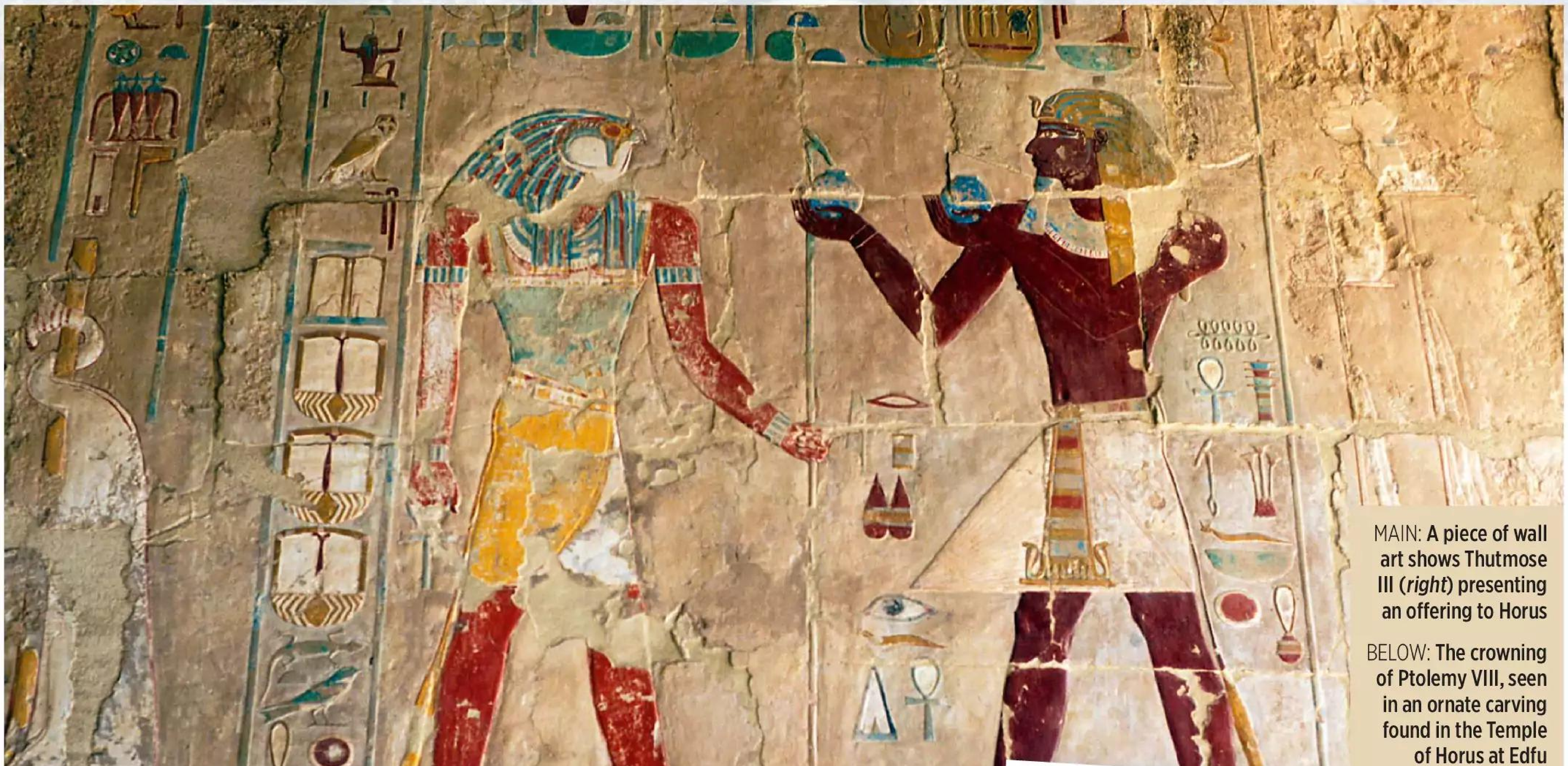
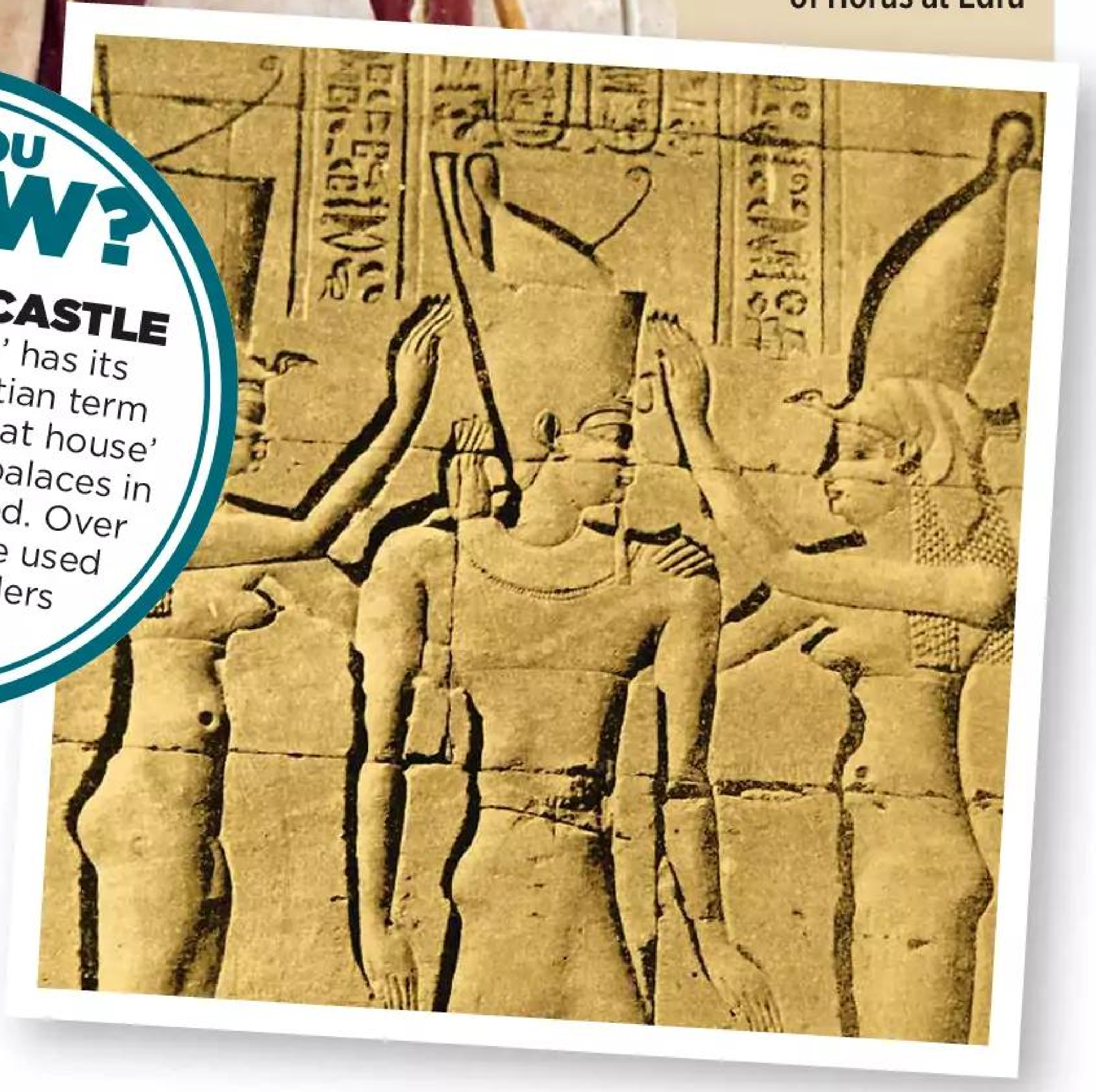


MAIN: **A piece of wall art shows Thutmose III (*right*) presenting an offering to Horus**

BELOW: **The crowning of Ptolemy VIII, seen in an ornate carving found in the Temple of Horus at Edfu**



**DID YOU KNOW?**

**KING OF THE CASTLE**

The title 'pharaoh' has its origins in the Egyptian term *per-aa*, meaning 'great house' – a reference to the palaces in which the rulers lived. Over time, it began to be used to refer to the rulers as well.

# LIFE AS A PHARAOH

They ruled over ancient Egypt and were immortalised by their tombs and statues, but what was life really like at the top?

One of the most important distinctions between the pharaohs of ancient Egypt and other rulers throughout history is that the pharaohs were revered as gods, and this meant they were treated as such. The pharaoh was truly believed to be an incarnation of the god Horus, and they were therefore seen as a spiritual link between the ordinary Egyptian people and their deities.

Thus, from the moment they became pharaoh, their rule was celebrated with great fanfare, with the festivities celebrating their coronation lasting for an entire year. After the pharaoh had attended the burial of their predecessor, there would be elaborate feasts, offerings to the gods, and grand processions down the River Nile.

A further celebration would eventually occur around the 30th year of their rule (assuming they made it that far), known as the Sed festival. This would commemorate the continued rule of the pharaoh and renew both the spiritual and physical energy of their reign. The pharaoh would normally wear an animal tail attached to their kilt during the festivities, and would have to run laps to prove their fitness to rule. After the first Sed festival, the celebrations would be repeated every three years or so.

Of course, to ensure that their dynasty flourished, pharaohs would be expected to marry, and this would often be to a close relative in order to keep the royal bloodline pure. The pharaoh could have multiple wives, but only one would be the 'great wife' or queen consort, and it was the children of this spouse that would take precedence as heirs. Having plenty of partners sometimes led to pharaohs having a startlingly high number of offspring: Ramesses II (r1279–1213 BC), for example, is believed to have had at least eight official wives and fathered more than 100 children. ▶

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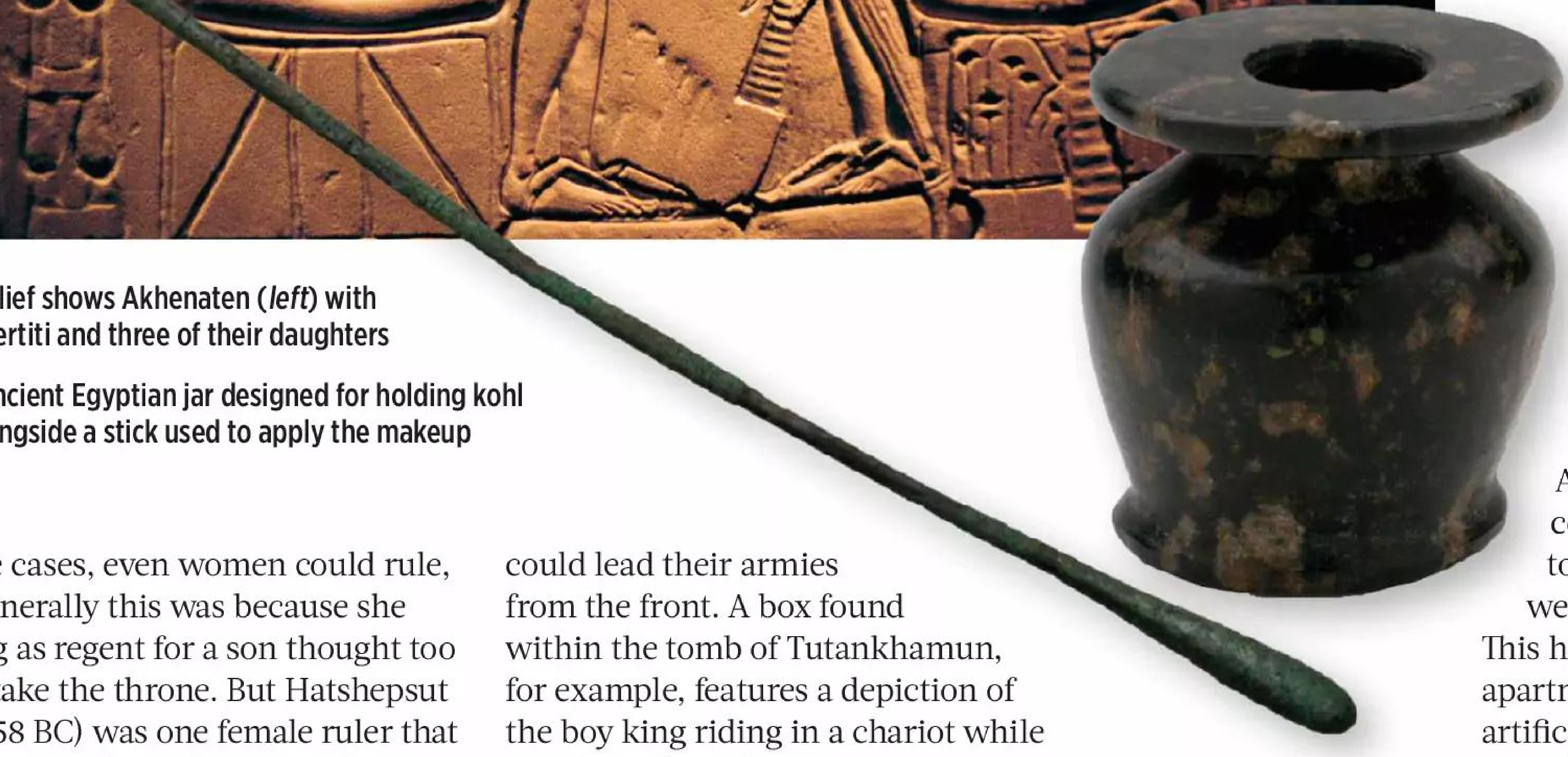
ABOVE: **A relief shows Akhenaten (*left*) with his wife Nefertiti and three of their daughters**



RIGHT: **An ancient Egyptian jar designed for holding kohl eyeliner, alongside a stick used to apply the makeup**

◀ In some cases, even women could rule, though generally this was because she was acting as regent for a son thought too young to take the throne. But Hatshepsut (r1473–1458 BC) was one female ruler that bucked this trend. Hatshepsut took on the title of pharaoh rather than queen, as well as other traditions normally reserved for male rulers, including wearing masculine clothing. She commanded the same respect and treatment as her father Thutmose I and husband Thutmose II had before her.

## CULTIVATING AN IMAGE

At every stage of their rule, the pharaoh would be well tended to. Upon waking each morning, they would be cleaned, groomed and dressed by their many servants. In fact, they would barely have a moment alone as their every need was catered for. They didn't even need to physically exert themselves, either, as they would be carried around on a chair.

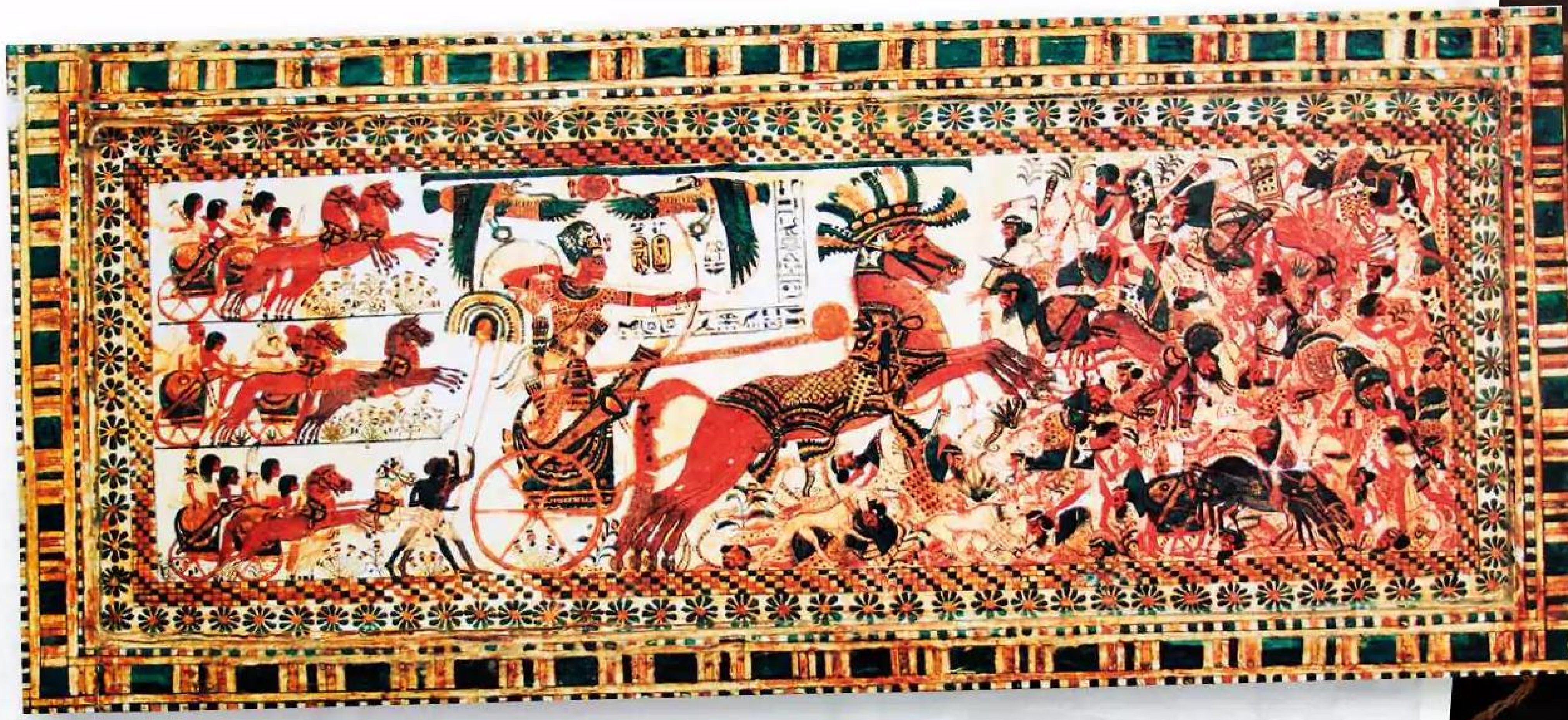
Much of the pharaoh's time would be spent greeting ambassadors, being updated by royal officials on their latest building projects and discussing military issues with generals. If it all got too much, duties could be delegated to the pharaoh's main advisors, known as viziers. But it wasn't necessarily all luxury: like many rulers, the pharaoh was expected to be a fierce warrior who could lead their armies from the front. A box found within the tomb of Tutankhamun, for example, features a depiction of the boy king riding in a chariot while attacking the Nubians.

Indeed, image was everything for the pharaoh, as when they were dressed in their royal regalia, the people believed the gods were speaking through them. Black kohl eyeliner was worn, which had a dual purpose – not only to help protect their vision from the glare of the sun, but also to invoke Ra and Horus, as the almond-shaped makeup was thought to resemble their eyes. Wigs and fake beards would also be worn, followed by exquisite golden jewellery to ensure they looked the part. Even the soles of their sandals were decorated, sometimes featuring an image of Egypt's enemies, so the pharaoh would 'crush' them as they walked. Similarly, artistic depictions of the pharaoh would show them holding both the crook and flail – symbols of royal power. The flail represented the fertility of the land, while the crook symbolised kingship and the pharaoh as a shepherd of his people.

But their power was also represented in their homes, which would exude style and splendour. The city of Memphis, for instance, had many grand palaces – some of which had their own lakes and parks. Amenhotep III (r1390–1352 BC) also commissioned a complex known today as the Malkata Palace on the west bank of the Nile, near Thebes. This had audience chambers, private apartments, a festival hall and even an artificial harbour nearby.

And when they held great banquets in these palaces, the pharaoh would eat exceptionally well. Beef, goose and antelope could be on the menu, despite meat often being hard to come by for

> "IF IT ALL GOT TOO MUCH, DUTIES COULD BE DELEGATED TO THE PHARAOH'S VIZIERS"



ABOVE: **An intricate panel found within the tomb of Tutankhamun shows the young pharaoh crushing his enemies** RIGHT: **The Great Temple at Abu Simbel, which was built for Ramesses II**

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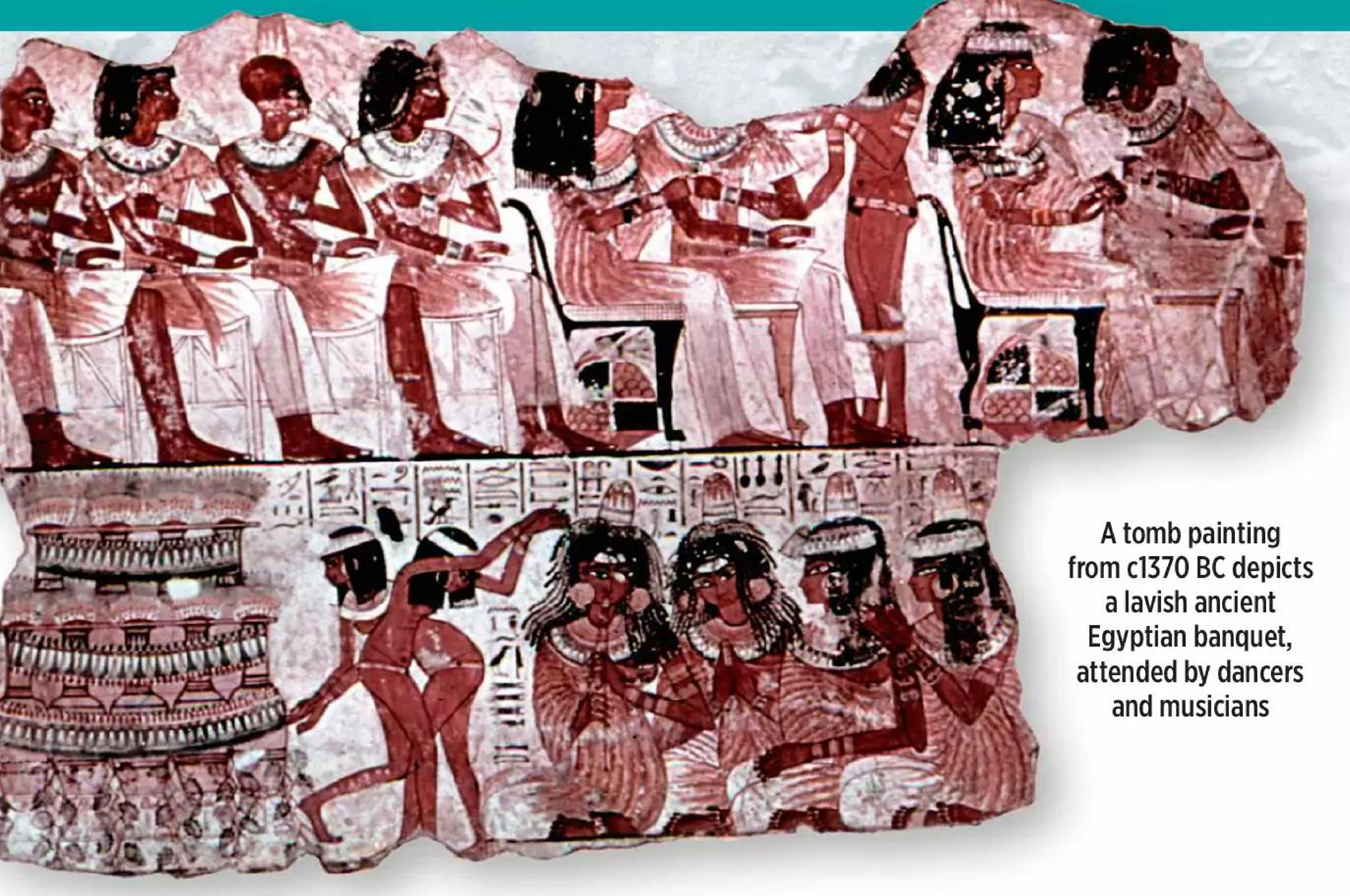


A tomb painting from c1370 BC depicts a lavish ancient Egyptian banquet, attended by dancers and musicians

most ordinary Egyptians. Wine was also a speciality, reserved only for the elite.

**HONOURING THE GODS**

As well as ruling over civil and military matters, the pharaoh also held the position of high priest. It was their responsibility to maintain ma'at – the divine order and justice of the land (personified by a goddess named Ma'at) – as well as to commission temples to honour the gods.

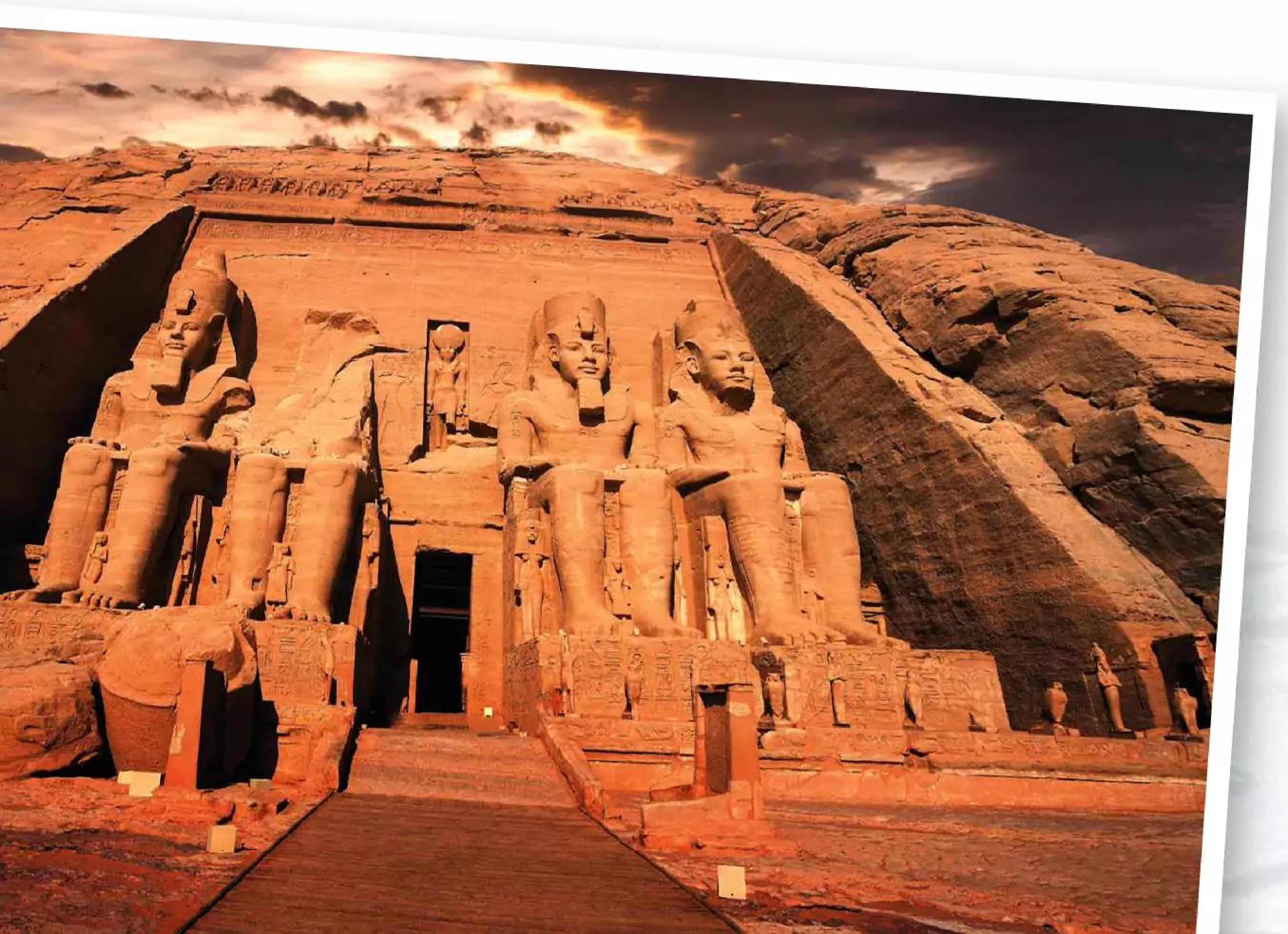
Ramesses II built more temples and monuments than any other pharaoh, including a famous temple at Abu Simbel dedicated to both himself and the gods Ra-Horakhty, Amun-Ra and Ptah. Unlike modern churches, mosques and temples, ancient Egyptian temples weren't for communal worship and only the pharaoh could make an offering to the gods and carry out rituals there.

In total, the ancient Egyptians are known to have worshipped more than 1,000 gods and goddesses, but when Amenhotep IV came to power in 1352 BC, he attempted to bring in monotheism – the belief in a single supreme deity. He changed his name to Akhenaten to honour the Aten, who he saw as the one true god. This didn't last, however, and the Egyptians soon went back to their many deities.

Although it may seem morbid by modern standards, the afterlife was always at the forefront of the ancient Egyptians' minds, and an important task for any pharaoh was to commission their own tomb. They were revered as much in death as on Earth, and therefore their body needed to be preserved.

The famous Great Pyramid at Giza was built as the final resting place for Khufu (r2589–2566 BC). It was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, and – despite its sheer size – was only built for Khufu and his immediate family. The pharaohs of ancient Egypt certainly had their own unique way of ensuring their legacy lived on. ⊙

**WORDS: EMMA SLATTERY WILLIAMS**



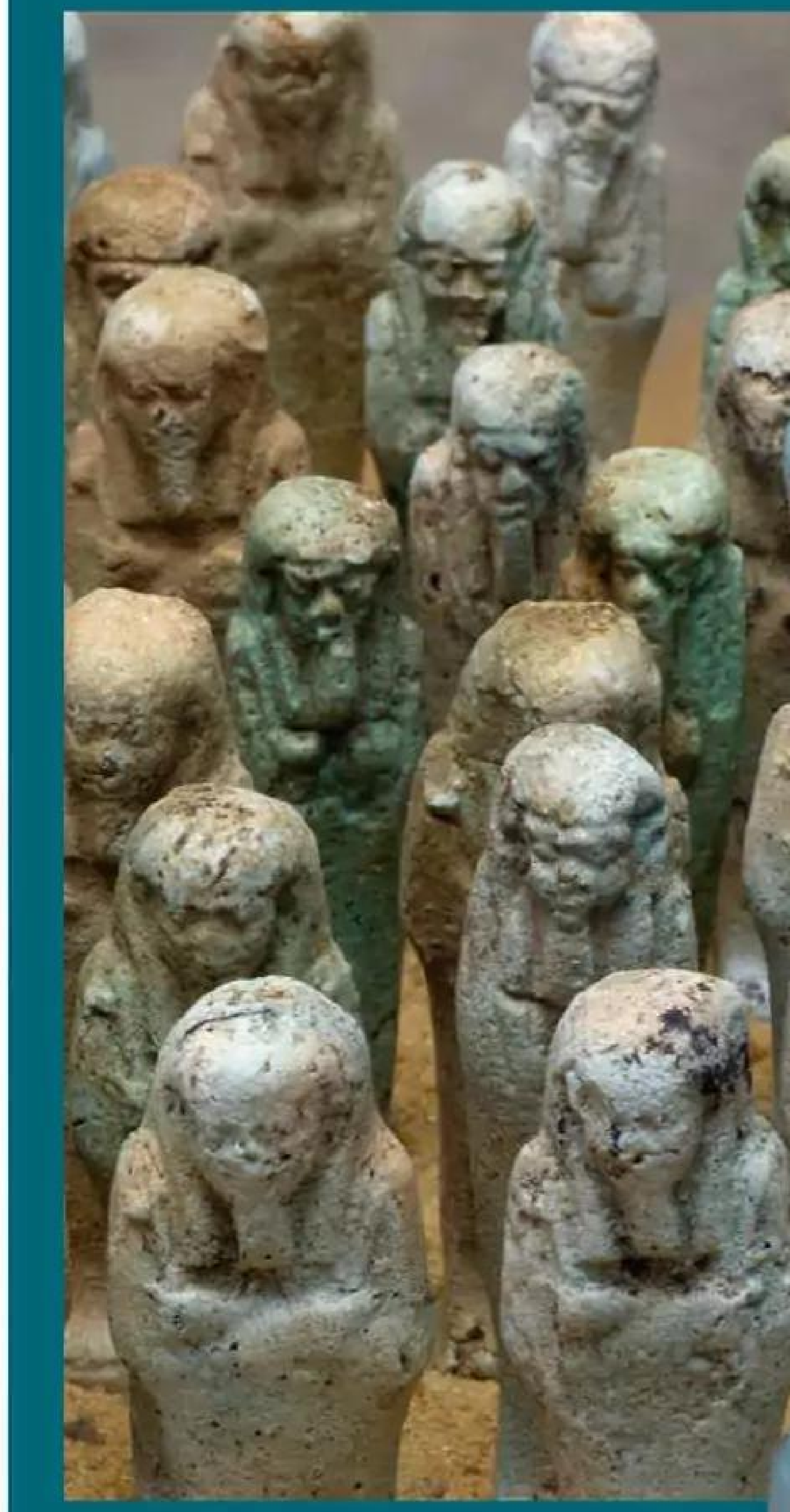
## SERVING THE PHARAOH

The rulers of ancient Egypt certainly had plenty of people at their beck and call…

If you worked in the royal household, the role you really wanted was sandal-bearer to the pharaoh. This was one of the most prestigious positions in ancient Egyptian society, as sandal-bearers would accompany the pharaoh on all important royal occasions, and also had the honour of washing the pharaoh's feet. As a result, they were likely privy to a wealth of sensitive information, including the latest court gossip.

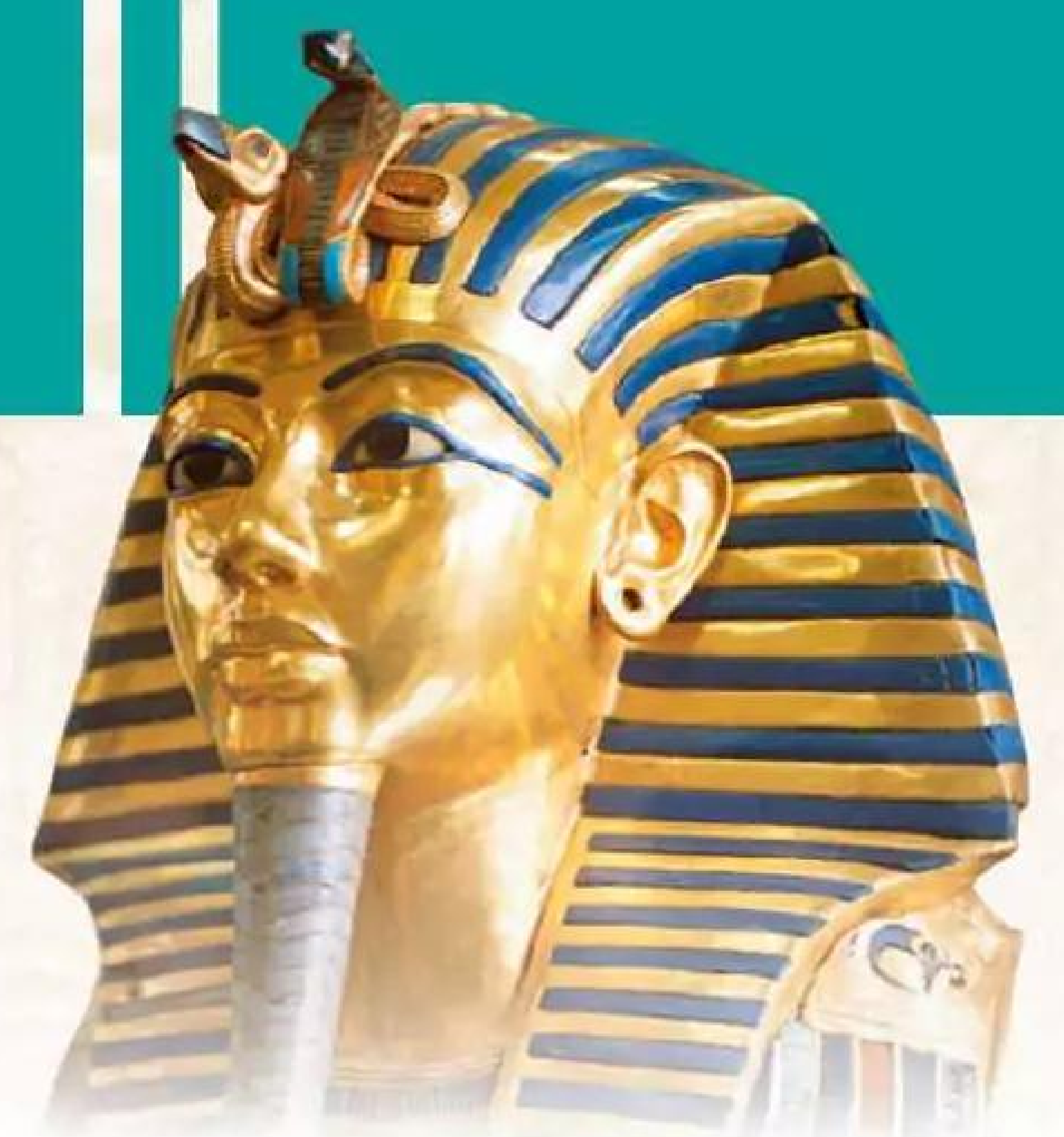
In the early days of the pharaohs, it's believed that some servants were sacrificed and buried alongside their ruler so they could continue to serve the deceased in the afterlife – death certainly didn't stop the pharaoh from owning them. However, this practice isn't thought to have lasted very long, and figurines of servants known as *ushabti* were buried alongside the pharaoh instead. They were expected to come to life and serve their king after he had died.

Servants within the royal household didn't have very many rights, but they weren't usually treated too badly, and were allowed to own property. Prisoners of war, however, could be forced into servitude and had no rights at all. Yet ancient Egypt was not like ancient Rome, and slavery was actually quite rare. Indeed, the image that Hollywood has given us of slaves building the pyramids is a falsehood, and it is more likely that people from all over Egypt would have been summoned to undertake these building projects as a form of national service.



ABOVE: A collection of *ushabti* found inside a tomb at Giza

RIGHT: A figurine of a man holding a pair of sandals. Carrying footwear for the pharaoh was a great honour



## 6 THINGS YOU (PROBABLY) DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT...

# TUTANKHAMUN

**Professor Joyce Tyldesley** shares some lesser-known facts about the life, death and legacy of Egypt's famous 'boy king'

Tutankhamun was born in c1344 BC, possibly at Amarna, the city of his father, Akhenaten (though Tutankhamun's parentage is hotly disputed). His mummy shows that he died when he was around 18 years old, but the exact cause of his demise is not known. Tutankhamun's body suffered damage at various stages – immediately before or immediately after death; during the curiously hasty mummification process; within the tomb (where a chemical reaction caused it to ignite); and while being extracted from its three coffins in the years following its 1922 discovery by Howard Carter.

Damage to Tutankhamun's chest and legs indicates that the cause of death was accidental – perhaps the result of an injury sustained while riding a chariot or out hunting. Others, meanwhile, have suggested that Tutankhamun may have been murdered or died on the battlefield.

Today, Tutankhamun is ancient Egypt's most famous pharaoh. But how much do you really know about the boy king?

GETTY IMAGES X6, ALAMY X1

MAIN: **A statue of Tutankhamun (*right*) alongside Amun – the king of the gods**

BELOW: **A cartouche-shaped box from Tutankhamun's tomb, displaying his nomen**

BELOW LEFT: **The boy king's mummified head. Experts still remain divided as to his cause of death**

## 1 HIS ORIGINAL NAME WAS NOT TUTANKHAMUN

Tutankhamun was originally named Tutankhaten. This name, which literally means 'living image of the Aten', reflected the fact that Tutankhaten's parents worshipped a sun god known as 'the Aten'.

After a few years on the throne, the young king changed his religion, abandoned the Aten, and started to worship the god Amun (who was revered as king of the gods). This caused him to change his name to Tutankhamun, or 'living image of Amun'.

Tutankhamun was not, however, the name by which his people knew him. Like all of Egypt's kings, Tutankhamun actually had five royal names. These took the form of short sentences that outlined the focus of his reign.

Officially, he was:
**(1) Horus Name:** Image of births
**(2) Two Ladies Name:** Beautiful of laws who quells the Two Lands/ who makes content all the gods
**(3) Golden Horus Name:** Elevated of appearances for the god/his father Ra
**(4) Prenomen:** Nebkheperure
**(5) Nomen:** Tutankhamun

His last two names, known today as the prenomen and the nomen, are the names that we see written in cartouches (oval loops) on his monuments. We know him by his nomen, Tutankhamun. His people, however, knew him by his prenomen, Nebkheperure, which literally translates as "[the sun god] Ra is the lord of manifestations".

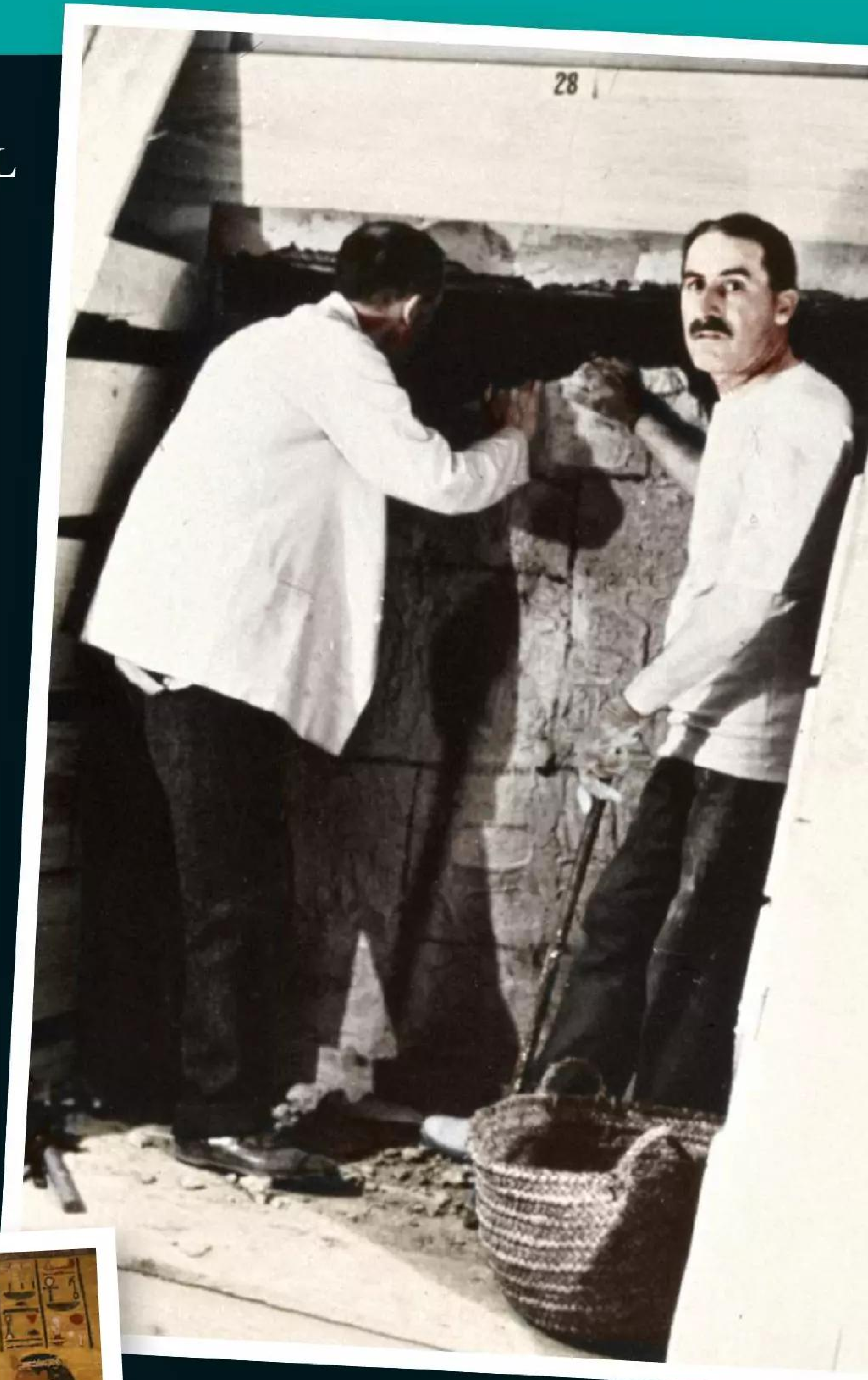
## 2 TUTANKHAMUN HAS THE SMALLEST ROYAL TOMB IN THE VALLEY OF THE KINGS

The first pharaohs built highly conspicuous pyramids in Egypt's northern deserts. However, by the time of the New Kingdom (1550–1069 BC), this fashion had ended. Most kings were now buried in relative secrecy in rock-cut tombs tunnelled into the Valley of the Kings on the west bank of the Nile at the southern city of Thebes (modern-day Luxor). These tombs had inconspicuous doors but were both spacious and well decorated inside.

Cemeteries carried their own potent magic, and dead kings were thought to have powerful spirits that might benefit others. Being buried among his ancestors would have helped Tutankhamun to achieve his own afterlife. It therefore seems likely that Tutankhamun would have wished to be buried in a splendid tomb in either the main valley or in an offshoot, the Western Valley, where his grandfather, Amenhotep III, was buried. But, whatever he may have intended, we know that Tutankhamun was actually buried in a cramped tomb cut into the floor of the main valley.

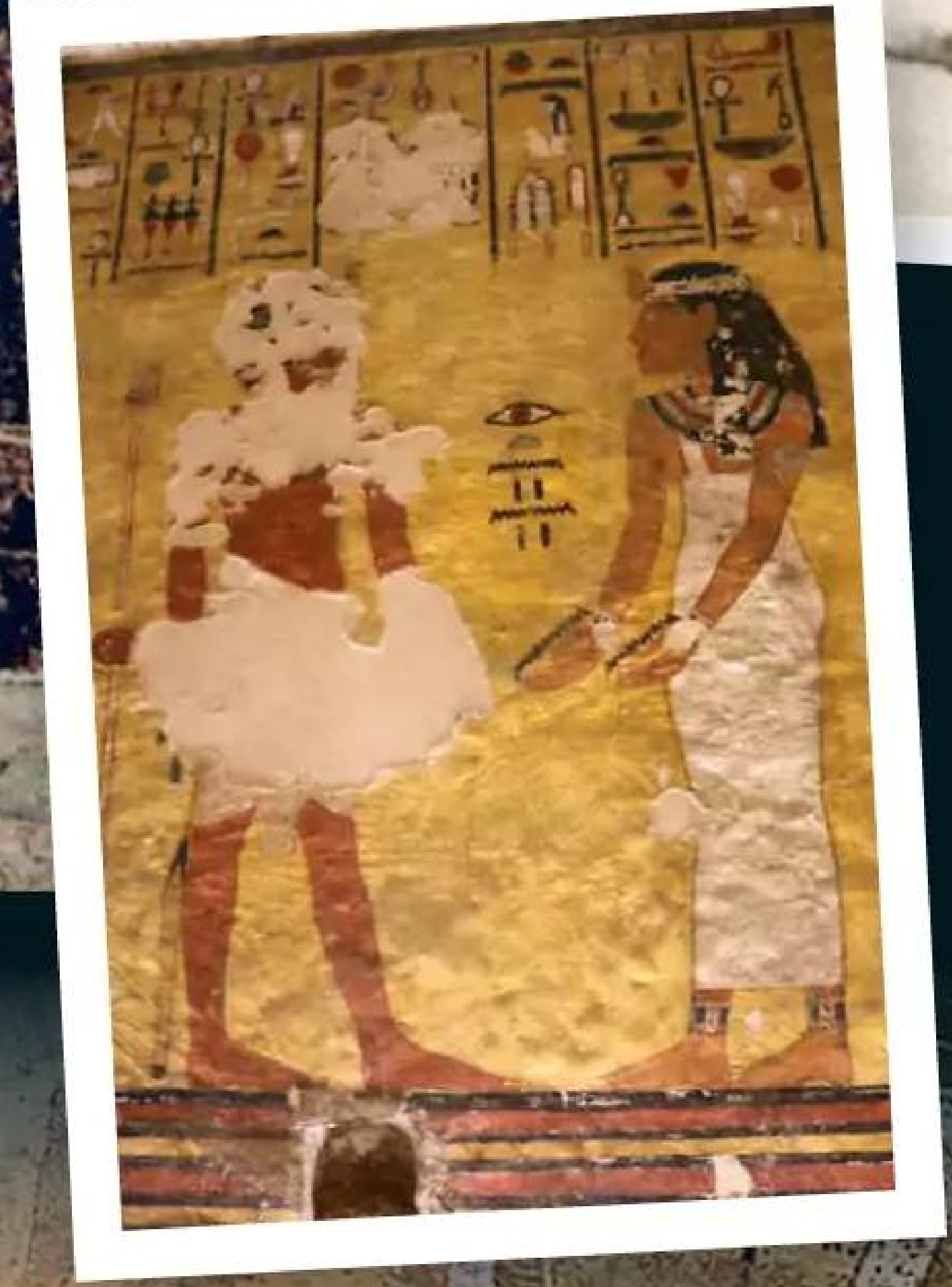
It may be that Tutankhamun simply died too young to complete his ambitious plans; his own tomb was unfinished, and so he had to be buried in a substitute, non-royal tomb. However, this seems unlikely, as other kings managed to build suitable tombs in just two or three years. It seems far more likely that Tutankhamun's successor, Ay, a king who inherited the throne as an elderly man, made a strategic swap. Just four years after Tutankhamun's death, Ay himself was buried in a splendid tomb in the Western Valley, close by the tomb of Amenhotep III.

The unexpectedly small size of Tutankhamun's tomb has led to recent suggestions that parts of it are still yet to be uncovered. Specifically, Egyptologists are currently investigating the possibility that there may be secret chambers hidden behind the plastered wall of his burial chamber.



ABOVE: **Howard Carter *(right)*, who discovered Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922, pictured with a colleague in the Valley of the Kings**

The Valley of the Kings, near the city of Luxor, is known to contain at least 60 tombs



LEFT: **Painted figures found within the burial chamber of Tutankhamun's successor, Ay**

BELOW: **Tutankhamun's own burial chamber features similar decorations, but his tomb is much more cramped and modest overall**

## 3

## HE WAS BURIED IN A SECOND-HAND COFFIN

Tutankhamun's mummy lay within a nest of three golden coffins, which fit snugly one inside another like a set of Russian dolls. During the funeral ritual the combined coffins were placed in a rectangular stone sarcophagus. Unfortunately, the outer coffin proved to be slightly too big, and its toes peeked over the edge of the sarcophagus, preventing the lid from closing. Carpenters were quickly summoned and the coffin's toes were cut away. More than 3,000 years later, Howard Carter would find the fragments lying in the base of the sarcophagus.

All three of Tutankhamun's coffins were similar in style: they were 'anthropoid', or human-form coffins, shaped to look like the god of the dead, Osiris, lying on his back and holding the crook and flail in his crossed arms. But the middle coffin had a slightly different style and its face did not look like the faces on other two coffins. Nor did it look like the face on Tutankhamun's death mask. Many Egyptologists now believe that this middle coffin – along with some of Tutankhamun's other grave goods – was originally made for the mysterious 'Neferneferuaten' – an enigmatic individual whose name is recorded in inscriptions and who may have been Tutankhamun's immediate predecessor. We do not know what happened to Neferneferuaten, nor how Tutankhamun came to be buried in his or her coffin.

The innermost coffin was made from thick sheets of beaten gold. This coffin measures 1.88m in length, and weighs 110.4kg. If it were to be scrapped today it would be worth well over £1m.

GETTY IMAGES X 1, ALAMY X1

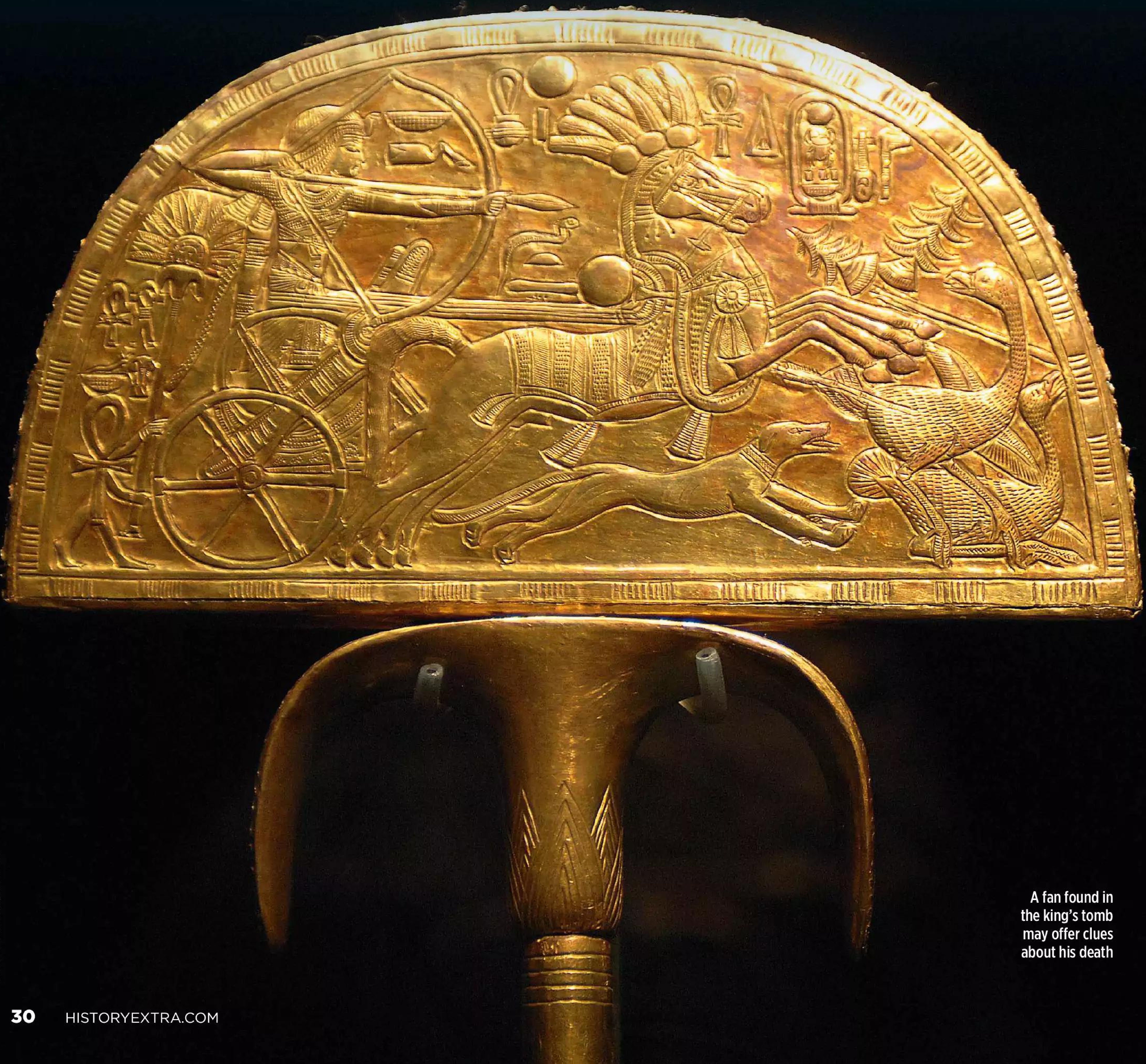
A photograph shows Howard Carter inspecting the outer and middle coffins

The king's middle coffin may have been made for an individual named Neferneferuate

## 4 TUTANKHAMUN LOVED TO HUNT OSTRICHES

Tutankhamun's ostrich-feather fan was discovered lying in his burial chamber, close by the king's body. Originally the fan consisted of a long golden handle topped by a semi-circular 'palm' that supported 42 alternating brown and white feathers. These feathers crumbled away long ago, but their story is preserved in writing on the fan handle. This tells us that the feathers were taken from ostriches captured by the king himself while hunting in the desert to the east of Heliopolis (near modern-day Cairo). The embossed scene on the palm shows, on one face, Tutankhamun setting off in his chariot to hunt ostrich, and on the reverse, the king returning in triumph with his prey.

Ostriches were important birds in ancient Egypt, and their feathers and eggs were prized as luxury items. Hunting ostriches was a royal sport that allowed the king to demonstrate his control over nature. It was a substitute for battle and, as such, was a dangerous occupation. We can see that Tutankhamun's body was badly damaged before he was mummified. Is the placement of his ostrich fan so close to his body significant? Is this, perhaps, someone's way of telling us that the young king died following a fatal accident on an ostrich hunt?



A fan found in the king's tomb may offer clues about his death

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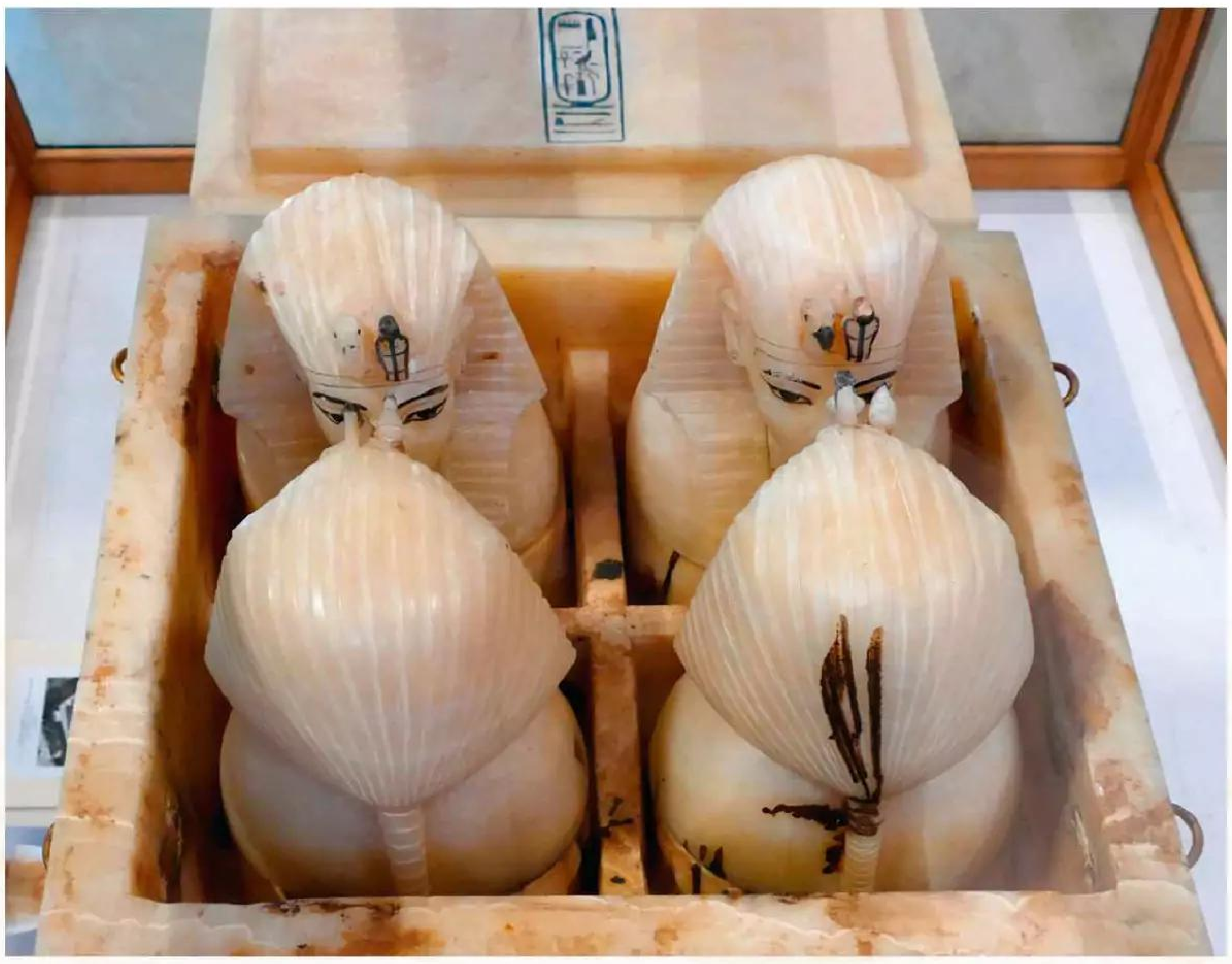
## 5 TUTANKHAMUN'S HEART IS MISSING

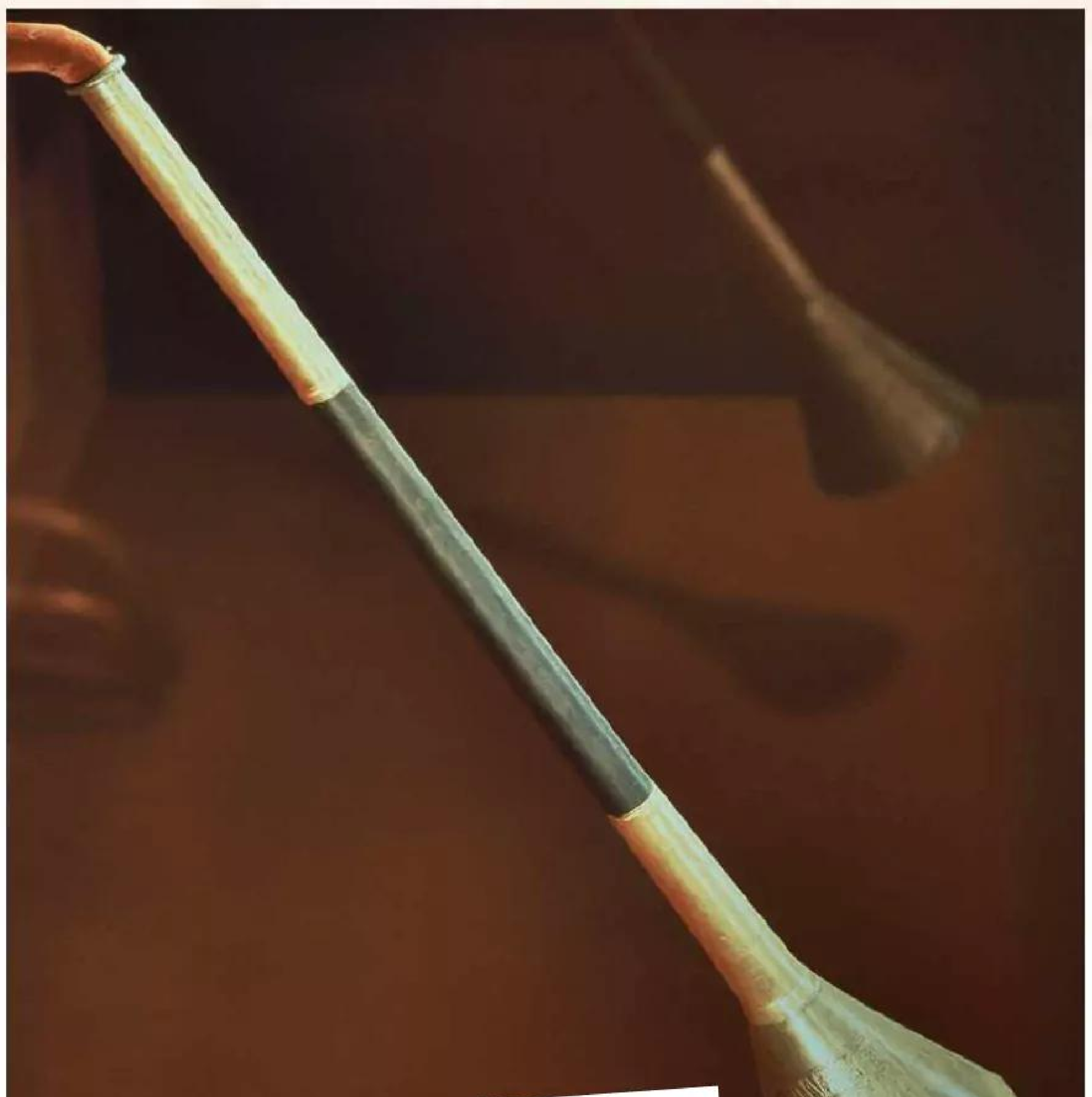
The ancient Egyptians believed that it was possible to live again after death but thought that this could only be achieved if the body was preserved in a lifelike condition. This led them to develop the science of artificial mummification.

Essentially, mummification involved desiccating the body in natron salt, then wrapping it in many layers of bandages to preserve a lifelike shape. The body's internal organs were removed at the start of the mummification process and preserved separately. The brain, its function then unknown, was simply thrown away – the heart, rather than the brain, was regarded as the organ of reasoning. As such, the heart would be required in the afterlife. It was therefore left in place and, if accidentally removed, immediately sewn back (though not always in its original location).

Tutankhamun, however, has no heart. Instead he was provided with an amuletic scarab inscribed with a funerary spell. This may have happened simply because the undertakers were careless, but it could also be a sign that Tutankhamun died far from home. By the time his body arrived at the undertakers' workshop, his heart may have been too decayed to be preserved.

Visitors to a London exhibition view an illuminated image of the Tutankhamun's remains (*main*). Although the king's heart is missing, most of his other internal organs were placed inside canopic jars (*below*)





ABOVE: **Like its silver counterpart, the bronze trumpet is engraved with images of the gods Ra, Ptah and Amun**

LEFT: **Both trumpets were played live on BBC radio in 1939**

## 6 HIS TRUMPETS HAVE ENTERTAINED AN AUDIENCE OF MORE THAN 150 MILLION

Tutankhamun's grave goods included a small collection of musical instruments: one pair of ivory clappers, two sistra (rattles) and two trumpets, one made from silver with a gold mouthpiece and the other made of bronze partially overlaid by gold. This would not have made a very satisfactory orchestra, and it seems that music was not high on Tutankhamun's list of priorities for his afterlife. In fact, his trumpets should more properly be classified as military equipment, while his clappers and sistra are likely to have had a ritual purpose.

On 16 April 1939, the two trumpets were played in a BBC live radio broadcast from Cairo Museum, which reached an estimated 150 million listeners. Bandsman James Tappern used a modern mouthpiece, which caused damage to the silver trumpet. In 1941 the bronze trumpet was played again, this time without a modern mouthpiece.

Some, influenced by the so-called myth of 'Tutankhamun's curse', have claimed that the trumpets have the power to summon war. They have suggested that it was the 1939 broadcast which caused Britain to enter World War II. ⊙

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**JOYCE TYLDESLEY** is professor of Egyptology at the University of Manchester. Her most recent book is *Tutankhamun – Pharaoh, Icon, Enigma: Ten Tales of Egypt's Enduring King* Headline, 2022)

# THE TOMB OF THE BOY KING

The discovery of Tutankhamun's final resting place, in 1922, remains one of history's greatest finds

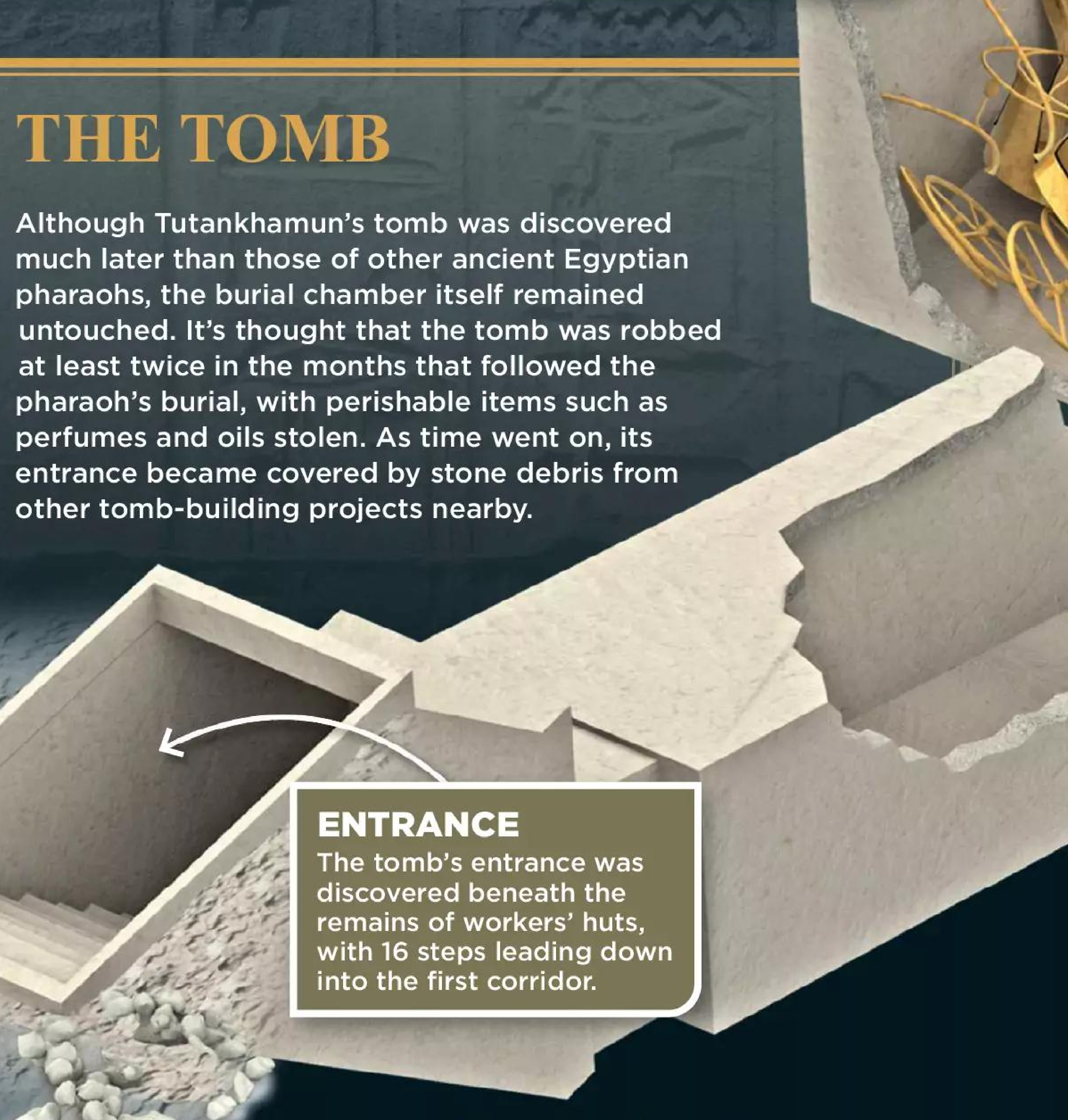
On 26 November 1922, as he stood before a sealed doorway beneath the Egyptian desert, British Egyptologist Howard Carter could only imagine what treasures lay within. Seal impressions on the tomb's – now dismantled – outer door had already revealed that this was none other than the much-searched-for tomb of the 18th Dynasty pharaoh Tutankhamun, but would it be intact? Making a breach in the door, Carter peered into the room beyond. A jumble of treasures and precious objects greeted his eyes, but most significant of all was a sealed doorway, set between two sentinel statues: the final resting place of the boy king.

It had taken Carter and his team years to find the tomb and it was to take a further two and a half months to clear and catalogue their way to the burial chamber itself. Finally, on 12 February 1924, the heavy granite lid of the quartzite sarcophagus was lifted, beneath which was a nest of three coffins, and the 3,300-year-old mummy of Tutankhamun. The search was over.

**WORDS: CHARLOTTE HODGMAN**

## THE TOMB

Although Tutankhamun's tomb was discovered much later than those of other ancient Egyptian pharaohs, the burial chamber itself remained untouched. It's thought that the tomb was robbed at least twice in the months that followed the pharaoh's burial, with perishable items such as perfumes and oils stolen. As time went on, its entrance became covered by stone debris from other tomb-building projects nearby.



**ANTECHAMBER**

The first room to be entered was the antechamber, which contained a wealth of objects, from chariot pieces to funeral beds. A small, roughly cut doorway in the wall led to an adjoining annex, which contained more items that the king was believed to need in the afterlife.

**ENTRANCE**

The tomb's entrance was discovered beneath the remains of workers' huts, with 16 steps leading down into the first corridor.

## TREASURE TROVE

More than 5,000 artefacts were found in Tutankhamun's tomb – from furniture and chariots to weapons and clothes. Here are some of our favourites…

1: A mummy bandage from Tutankhamun's embalming cache 2: Board game made of painted ivory 3: Gilded wooden bed, one of several found in the tomb 4: Pair of golden sandals found on the feet of Tutankhamun's mummy 5: Gilded wooden chariot, one of six found in the tomb

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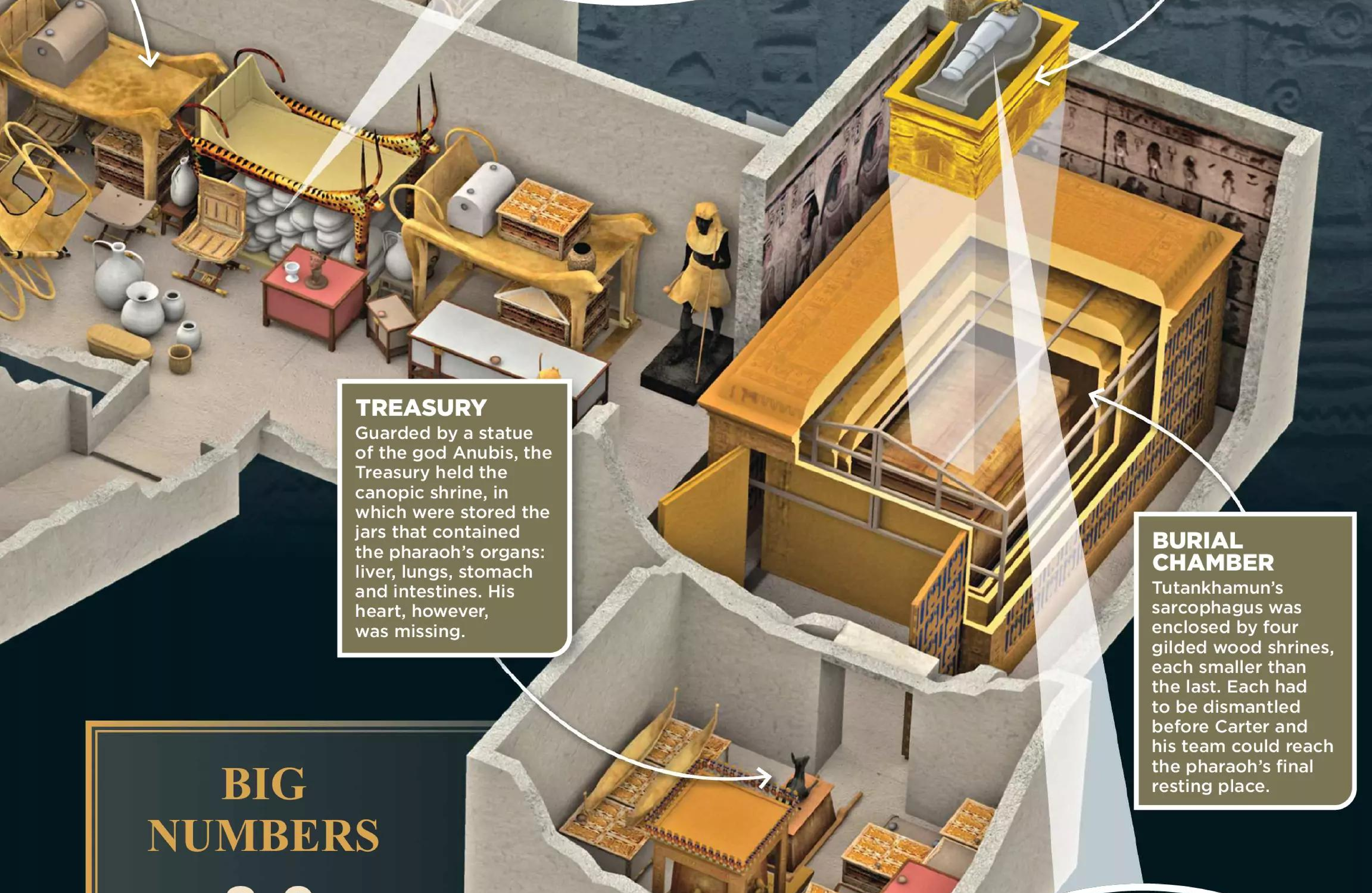


### TUTANKHAMUN'S MUMMY

The pharaoh's mummified body was encased in three coffins. The largest coffin proved too big for the stone sarcophagus, so its toes were cut away. The wood shavings left by the carpenters were found by Carter more than 3,000 years later.

### TREASURY

Guarded by a statue of the god Anubis, the Treasury held the canopic shrine, in which were stored the jars that contained the pharaoh's organs: liver, lungs, stomach and intestines. His heart, however, was missing.

### BURIAL CHAMBER

Tutankhamun's sarcophagus was enclosed by four gilded wood shrines, each smaller than the last. Each had to be dismantled before Carter and his team could reach the pharaoh's final resting place.

## BIG NUMBERS

**8–9**

The age Tutankhamun is thought to have been when he ascended the throne

**5,398**

The total number of items found in the tomb

**130**

The number of walking sticks buried with Tutankhamun. Scans have revealed that he had a bent foot, but experts are divided as to whether he actually walked with a limp.

**3**

The number of coffins within the sarcophagus, stacked one inside the other like Russian dolls

**10**

The weight, in kilograms, of Tutankhamun's golden death mask (22lbs)

# THE MEN WHO RULED ANCIENT EGYPT

You've heard of King Tutankhamun, but do you know the stories of these six other notable male rulers?

## THUTMOSE III

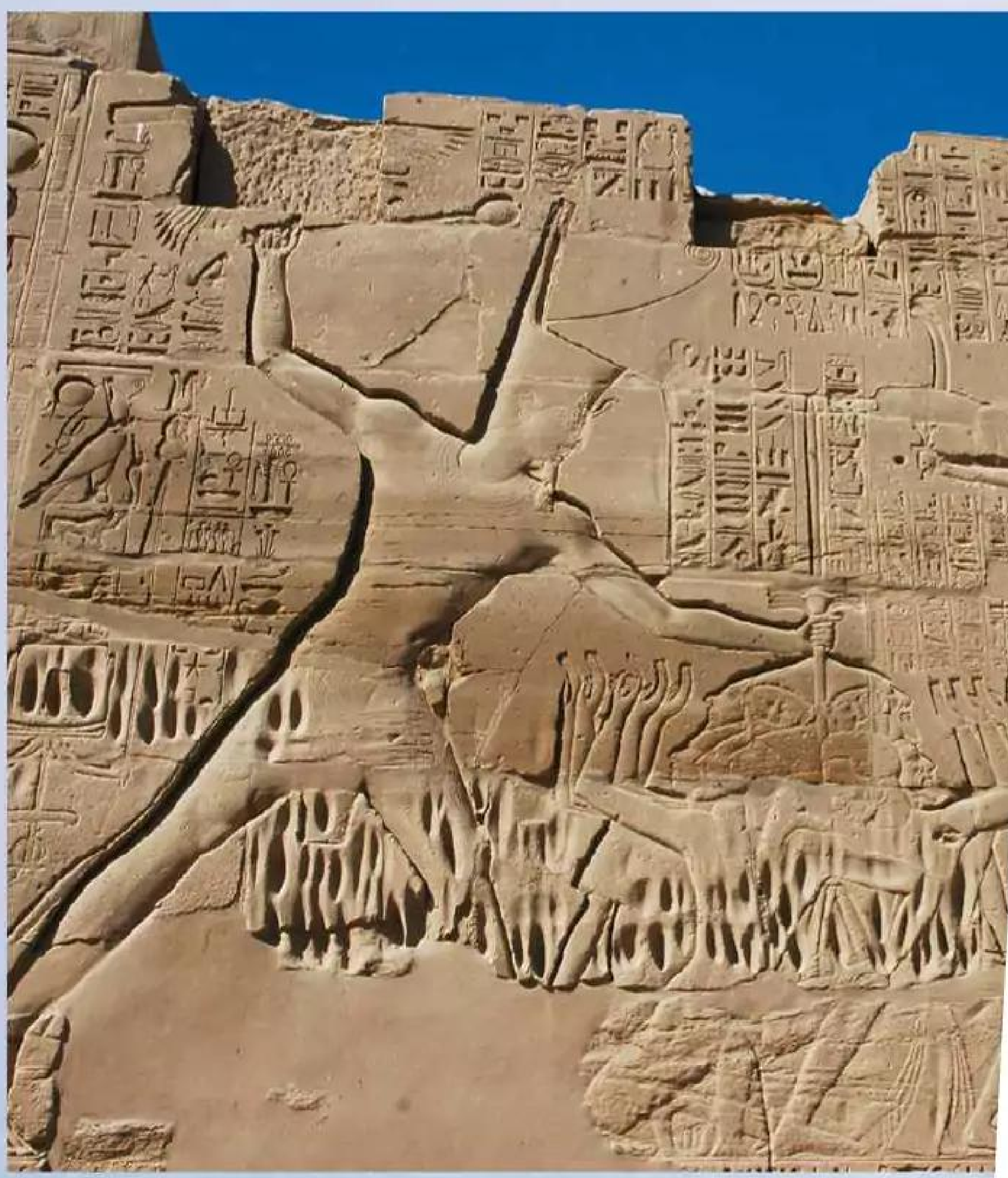
ruled 1479–1425 BC

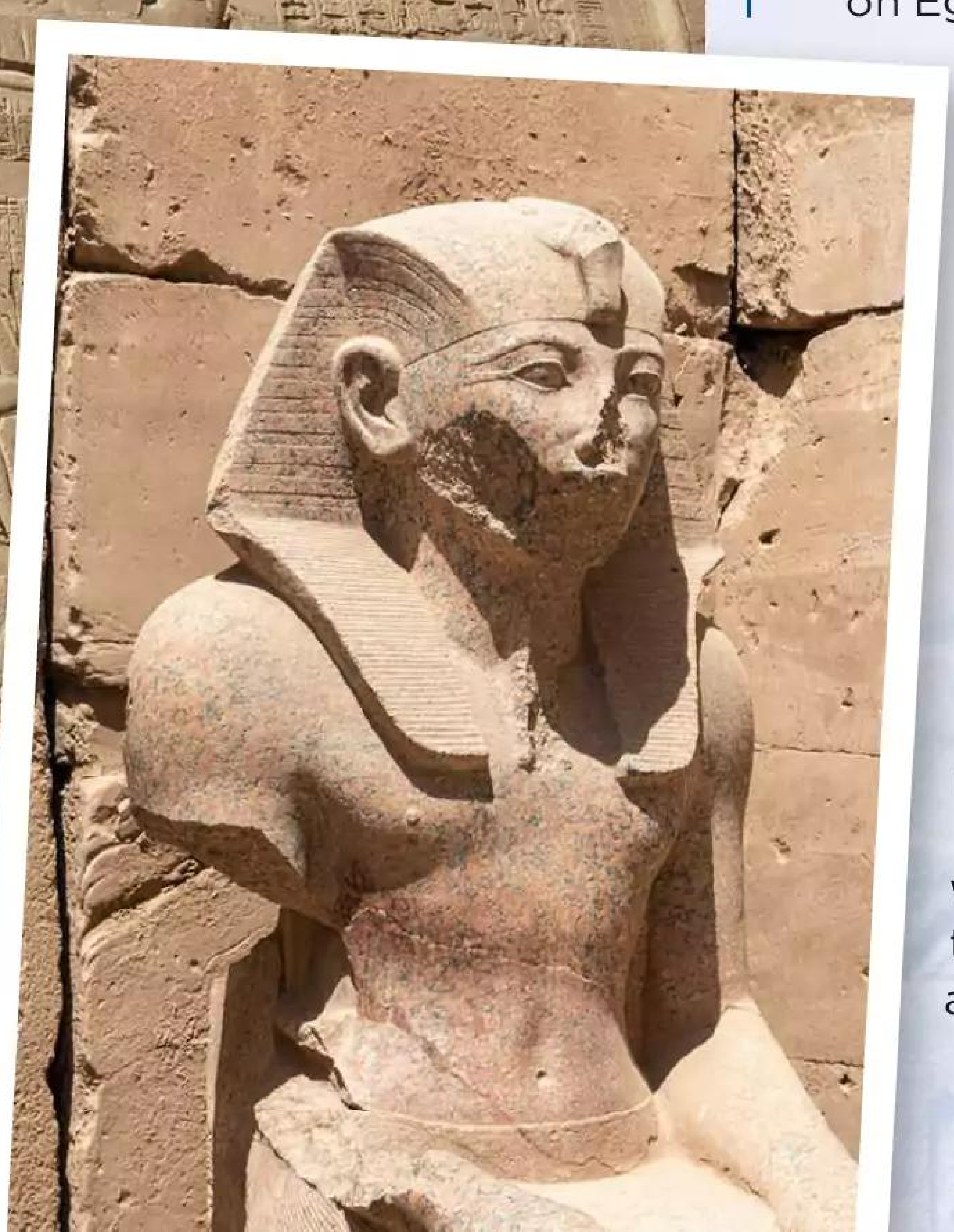
▼ Dubbed 'the Napoleon of Egypt' by Egyptologists, Thutmose was a military powerhouse. He started training in the arts of war as a youth, when his stepmother Hatshepsut (*see page 21*) was ruling Egypt as his co-regent. After her death in 1458 BC he came to sole power and put his military know-how to use.

Thutmose expanded Egypt's empire further than ever before, winning 17 campaigns. To the north, he seized Syria; his troops also campaigned in Nubia (an ancient north African province). Here they crushed tribes and put many to work in the region's gold mines – with the profits lining Egypt's coffers.

With the wealth from these mines and Tribute sent by the peoples Thutmose had conquered, the pharaoh was able to splash out on an ambitious building programme. He extended the principal temple at Karnak dedicated to Amun, king of the gods at this time, adorning the site with imposing granite obelisks, and erected more than 50 temples. He was also a keen hunter, taking on elephants and lions.

In his twilight years, Thutmose made his son Amenhotep II his co-regent. After dying in his mid-fifties he was interred in the Valley of the Kings, with his mummy being discovered in 1889.





ABOVE: **An exterior wall of the Great Hypostyle Hall, Karnak, shows Thutmose III smiting his enemies in battle**

RIGHT: **A seated statue of Thutmose III in the Festival Hall – another section of the Karnak temple complex**

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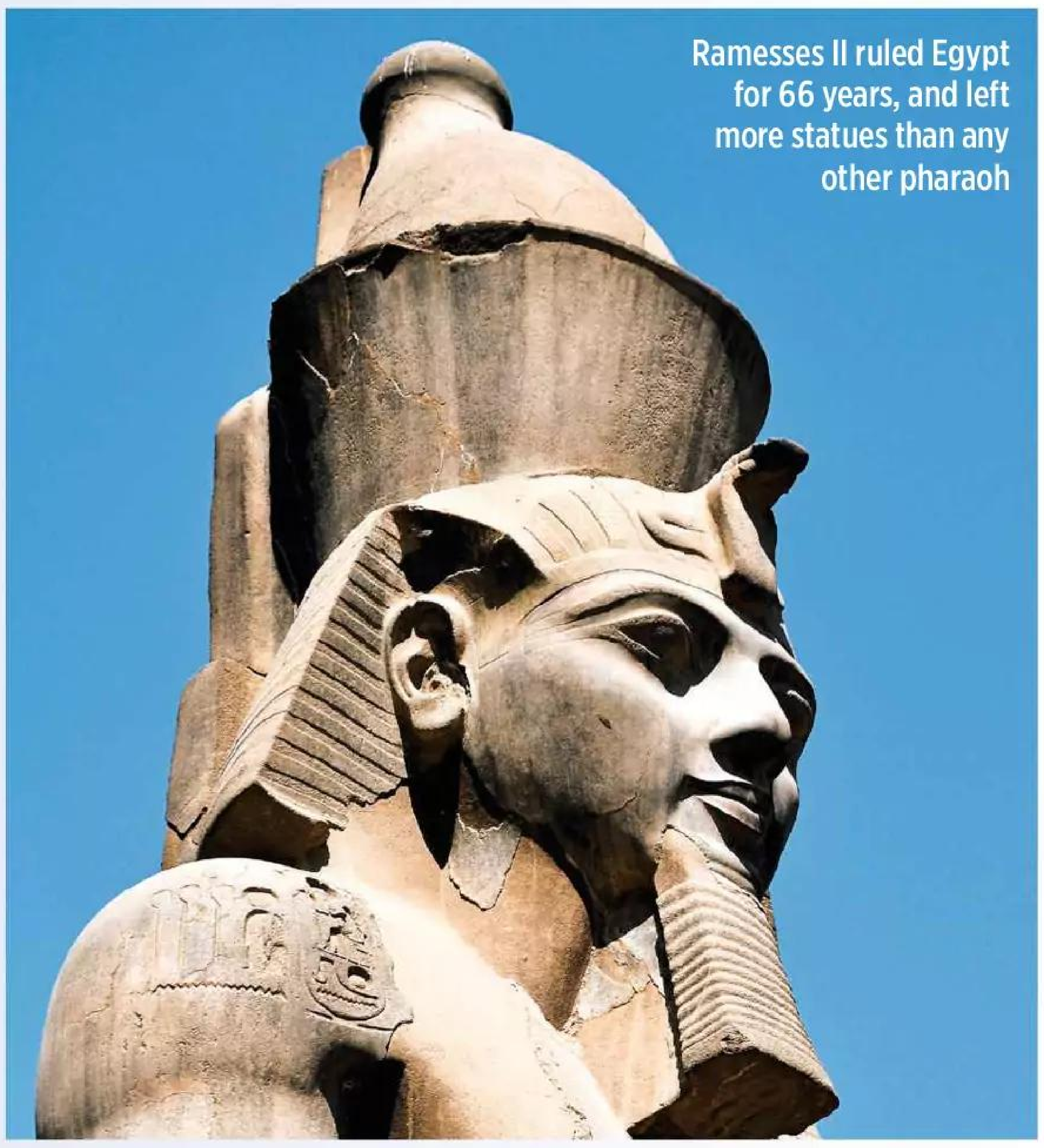


Ramesses II ruled Egypt for 66 years, and left more statues than any other pharaoh

## RAMESSES II

ruled 1279–1213 BC

▲ Ramesses II is remembered as one of Egypt's most powerful rulers of the New Kingdom – an assessment the prideful pharaoh would no doubt agree with. He became Egypt's ruler after his father Sety I died in 1279 BC, although this wasn't his first taste of power: at 14 he'd been named prince regent and served in his father's military campaigns.

During his 66-year rule he focused on warmongering, determined to restore Egypt's lost lands. He built forts on Egypt's border with Libya and frequently clashed with the Hittites (an Anatolian empire). For instance, in 1275 BC he took on the Hittites in a huge chariot battle to try and conquer the Syrian city of Kadesh. Although Ramesses presented the battle as a huge victory – boasting "their hearts quaked with fear when they saw me" – in reality, it ended with a truce.

However, it's for his building works that Ramesses is perhaps best remembered. Many kings commissioned statues of themselves, but Ramesses took this to the extreme, ordering more than any other ruler in Egypt's history. He also built scores of temples and even an entire royal city, called Pi-Ramesses.

Notably, Ramesses is known for taking multiple wives and keeping a harem of 200 women. By the time of his death at the age of 90, he had allegedly sired more than 100 children.

## DJOSER

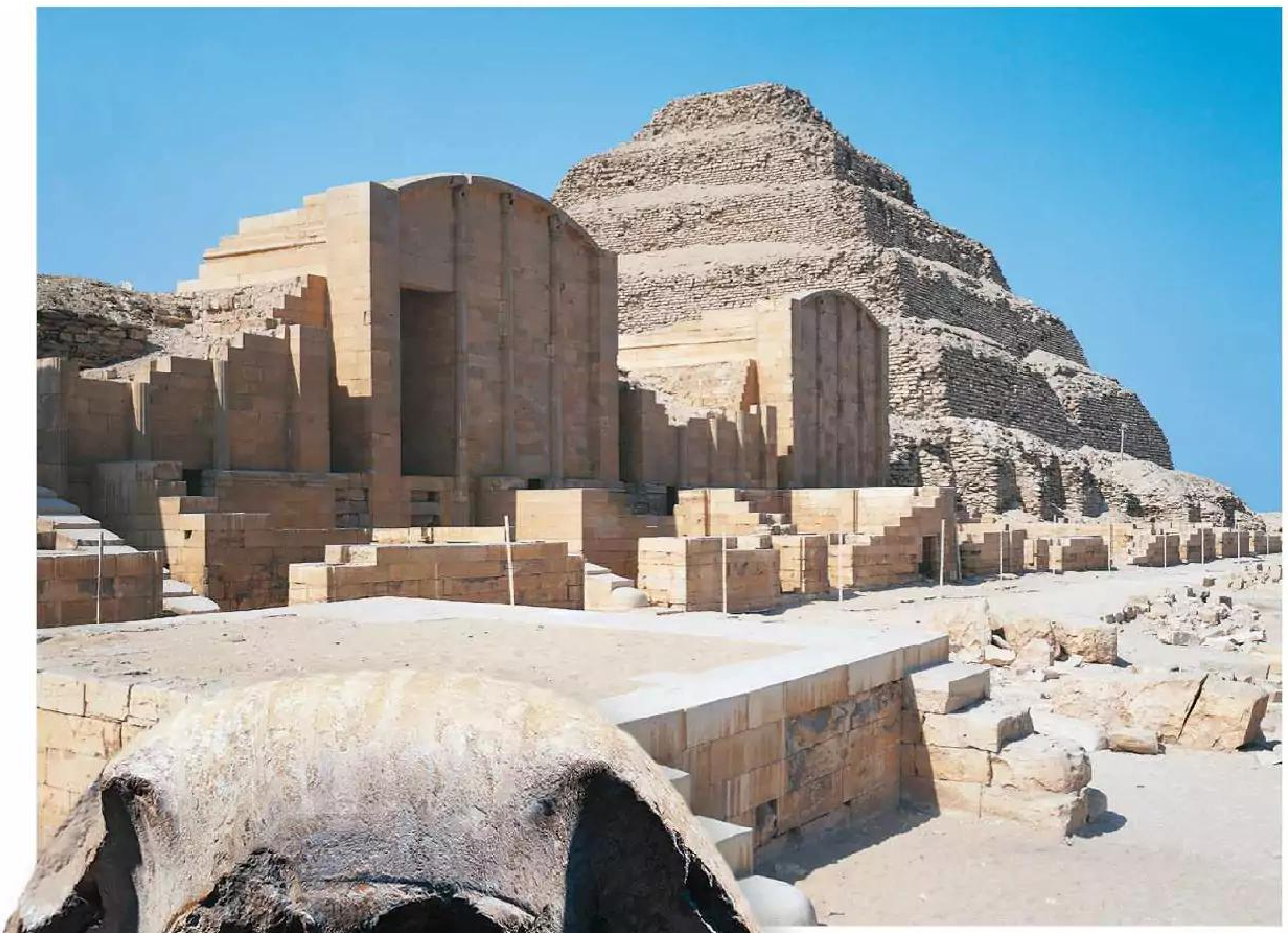
ruled 2667–2648 BC

▼ Djoser's rule saw the creation at Saqqara of one of Egypt's most famous landmarks: this sprawling necropolis, which dates back to Predynastic times, is home to the Step Pyramid, a monumental structure that was the first of its kind to be built in history.

Constructed solely from stone, Saqqara marked a radical departure from previous building works in Egypt, which typically also incorporated mud bricks. The shape of the buildings was different, too, with stepped pyramids replacing flat-roofed royal tombs. These radical designs were the brainchild of Imhotep, one of Djoser's advisors.

Before the pharaoh constructed the Step Pyramid, he won the admiration of the Egyptians for rebuilding the Temple of Khnum (the god of the Nile).

Djoser also made history as the first pharaoh to make Memphis his permanent and only home. This helps explain why the city became the beating heart of the Old Kingdom. He lived there with his wife (and likely his half-sister), Hetephernebti, who seems to have been his only wife.



ABOVE: **The famous Step Pyramid complex looms over the rest of the Saqqara necropolis**

LEFT: **A statue of Djoser from Saqqara – now housed in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo**

> **"DJOSER'S RULE SAW THE CREATION OF ONE OF EGYPT'S MOST FAMOUS LANDMARKS"**

## AMENHOTEP III

ruled 1390–1352 BC

◀ Ruling in a time of relative peace, Amenhotep made sure the empire prospered – economically and culturally. He worked to build strong trade relations, using clay tablets to communicate with the leaders of nearby kingdoms in what are history's earliest diplomatic letters. He also distributed more than 200 stone scarabs inscribed with five of the biggest events from the first 12 years of his rule, and erected various temples and statues. His seven children by his chief queen included Akhenaten, his successor (*see below*).

## AKHENATEN

ruled 1352–1336 BC

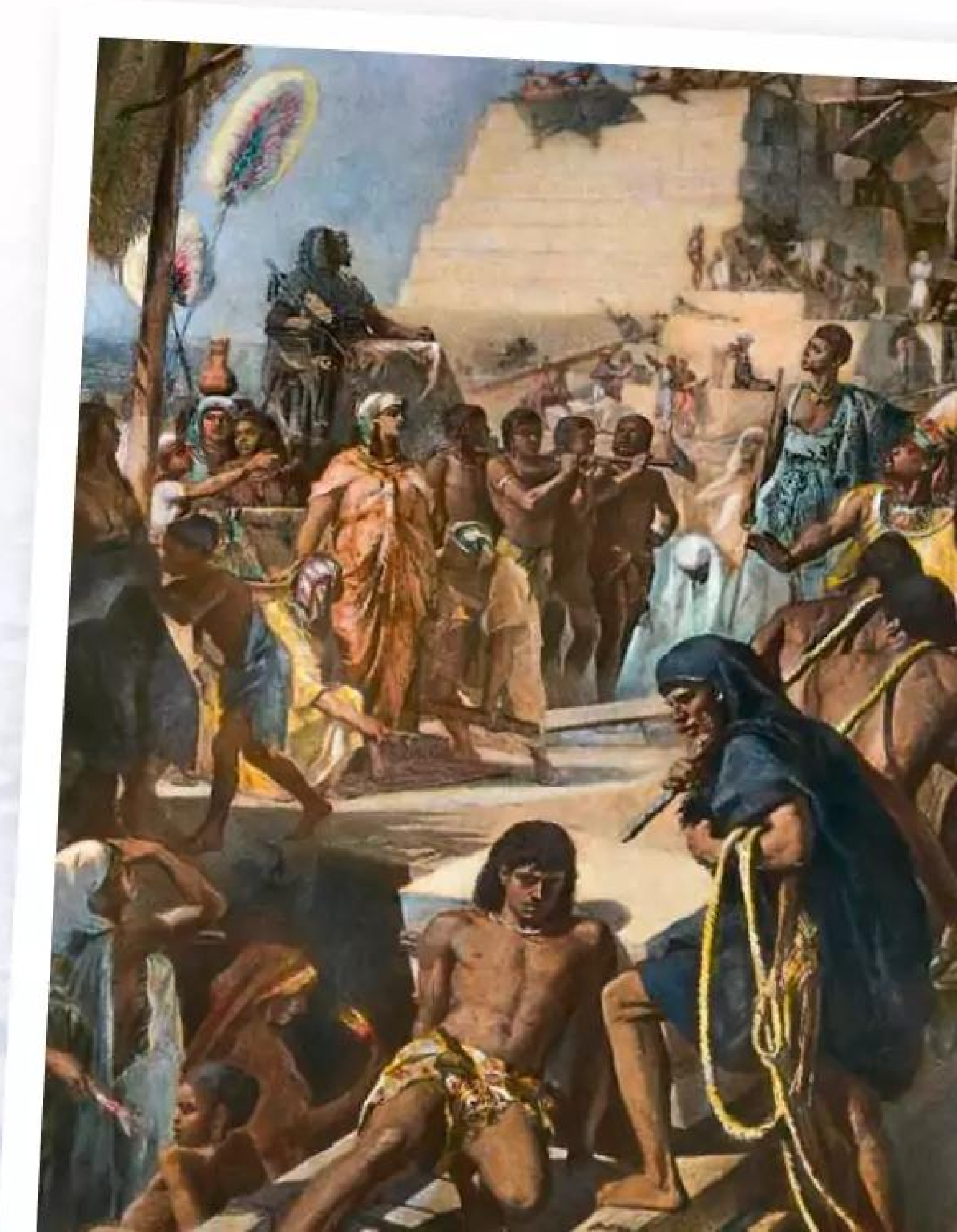
◀ The Egyptians venerated a pantheon of gods, but Akhenaten believed there was only one deity who should be worshipped, a sun god known as the Aten – and that his subjects should follow suit. In 1346 BC he created a new capital, dedicated to the Aten, at Amarna. His wife, Nefertiti (*see page 21*), is often depicted acting alongside him and supporting him in these beliefs. After Akhenaten's death, however, Egypt soon returned to its original way of worship.

## KHUFU

ruled 2589–2566 BC

▼ While the Greek writer Herodotus claimed Khufu's rule was one of suffering and oppression, this damning view is in contrast to his reputation as a wise pharaoh and builder. He commissioned the Great Pyramid of Giza, one of the Seven Ancient Wonders of the World. Herodotus is also responsible for the common idea that the pyramids were built on slave labour. It's actually more likely the 2.3 million building blocks were dragged into place by conscripted workers. ⊙

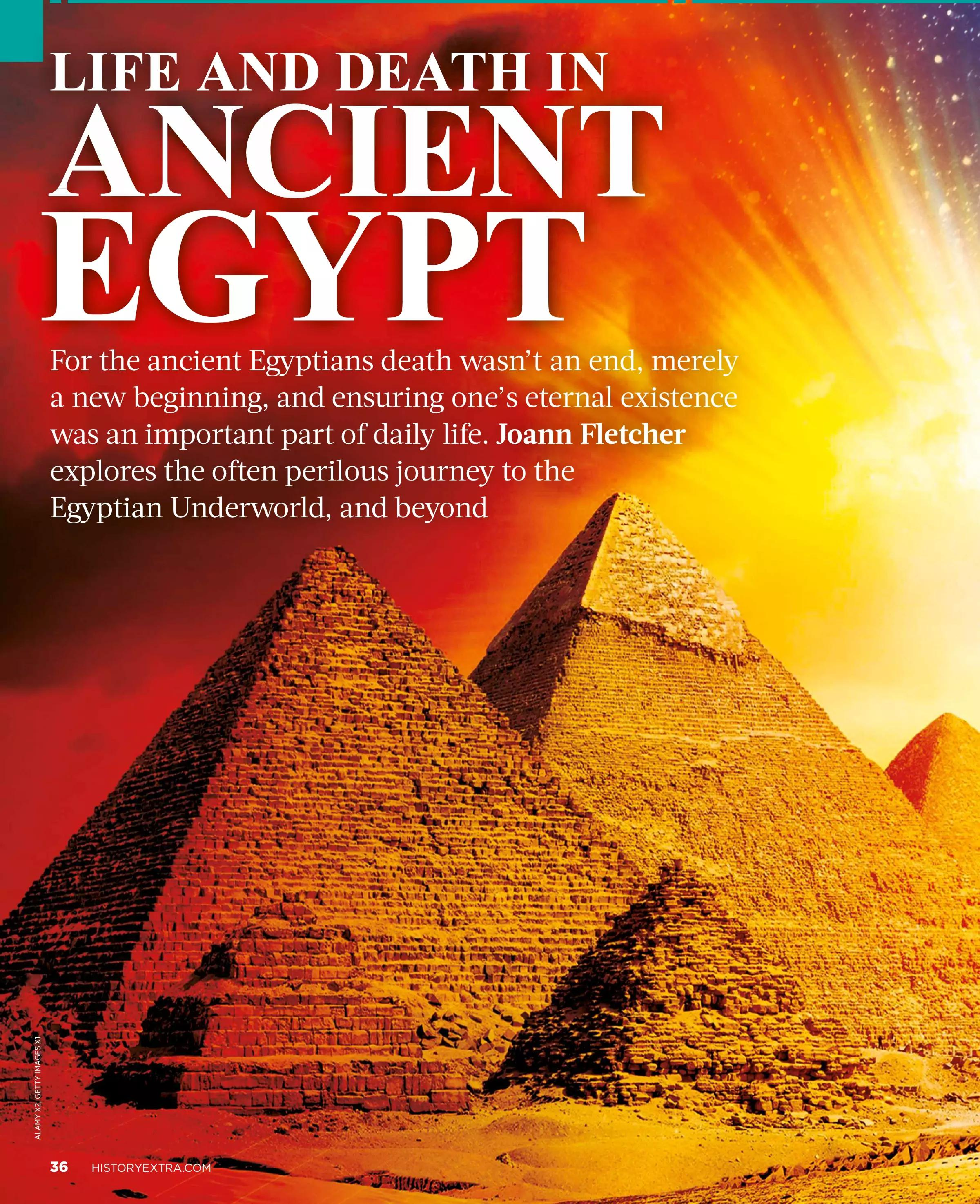
**WORDS: RHIANNON DAVIES**



**A 19th-century painting imagines workers building Khufu's Great Pyramid. Contrary to popular belief, slaves were likely not used**

# LIFE AND DEATH IN ANCIENT EGYPT

For the ancient Egyptians death wasn't an end, merely a new beginning, and ensuring one's eternal existence was an important part of daily life. **Joann Fletcher** explores the often perilous journey to the Egyptian Underworld, and beyond



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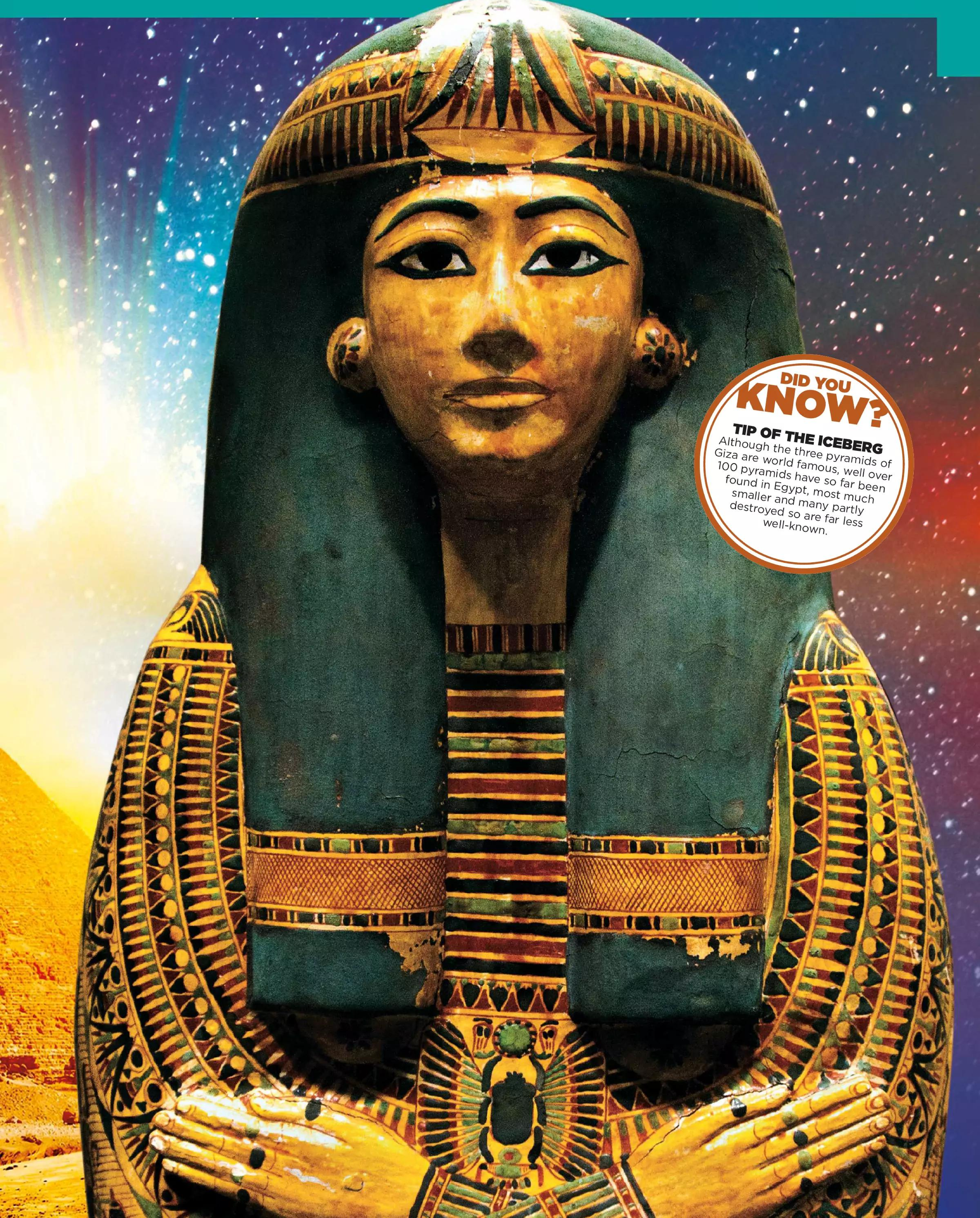
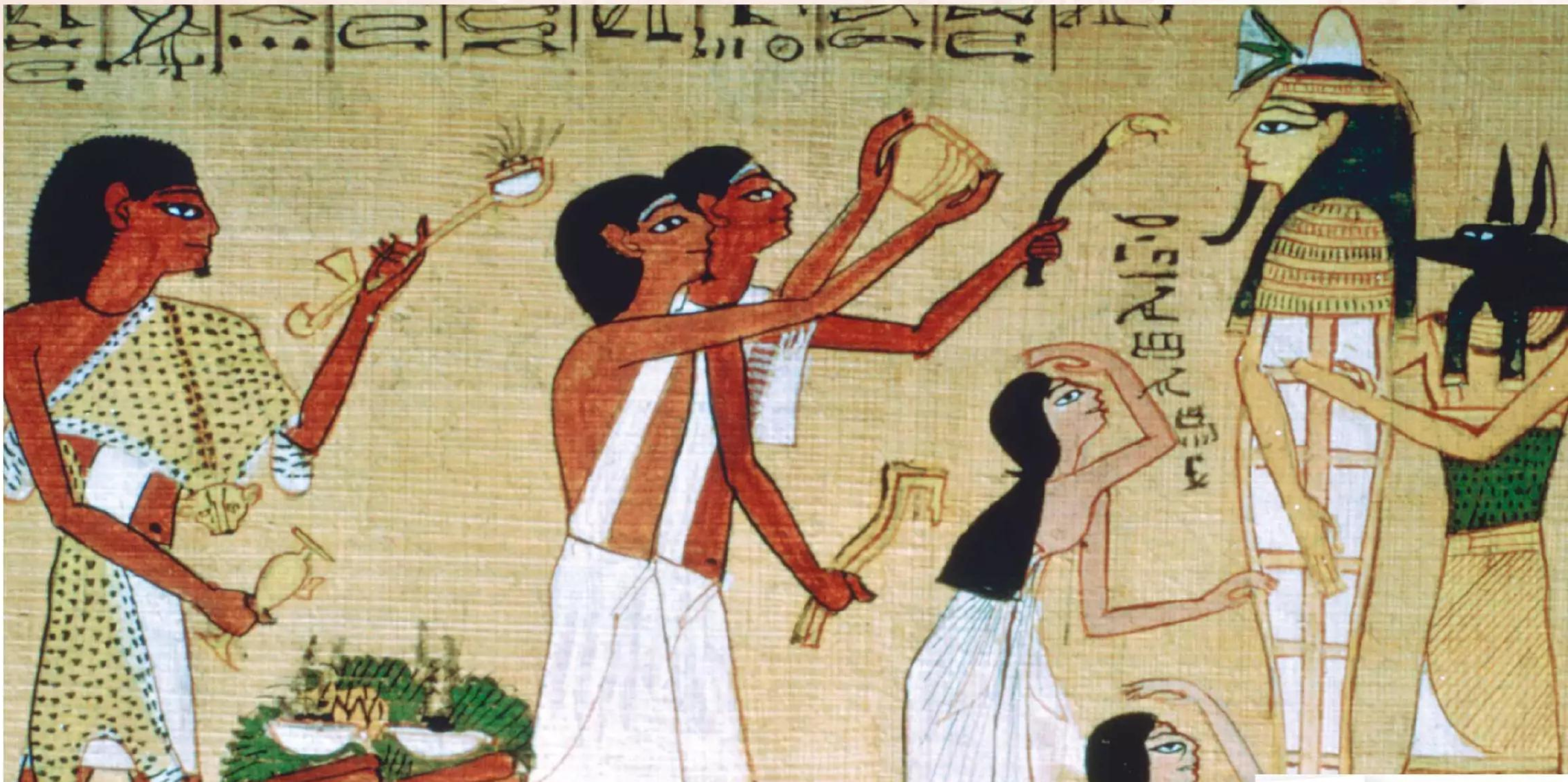


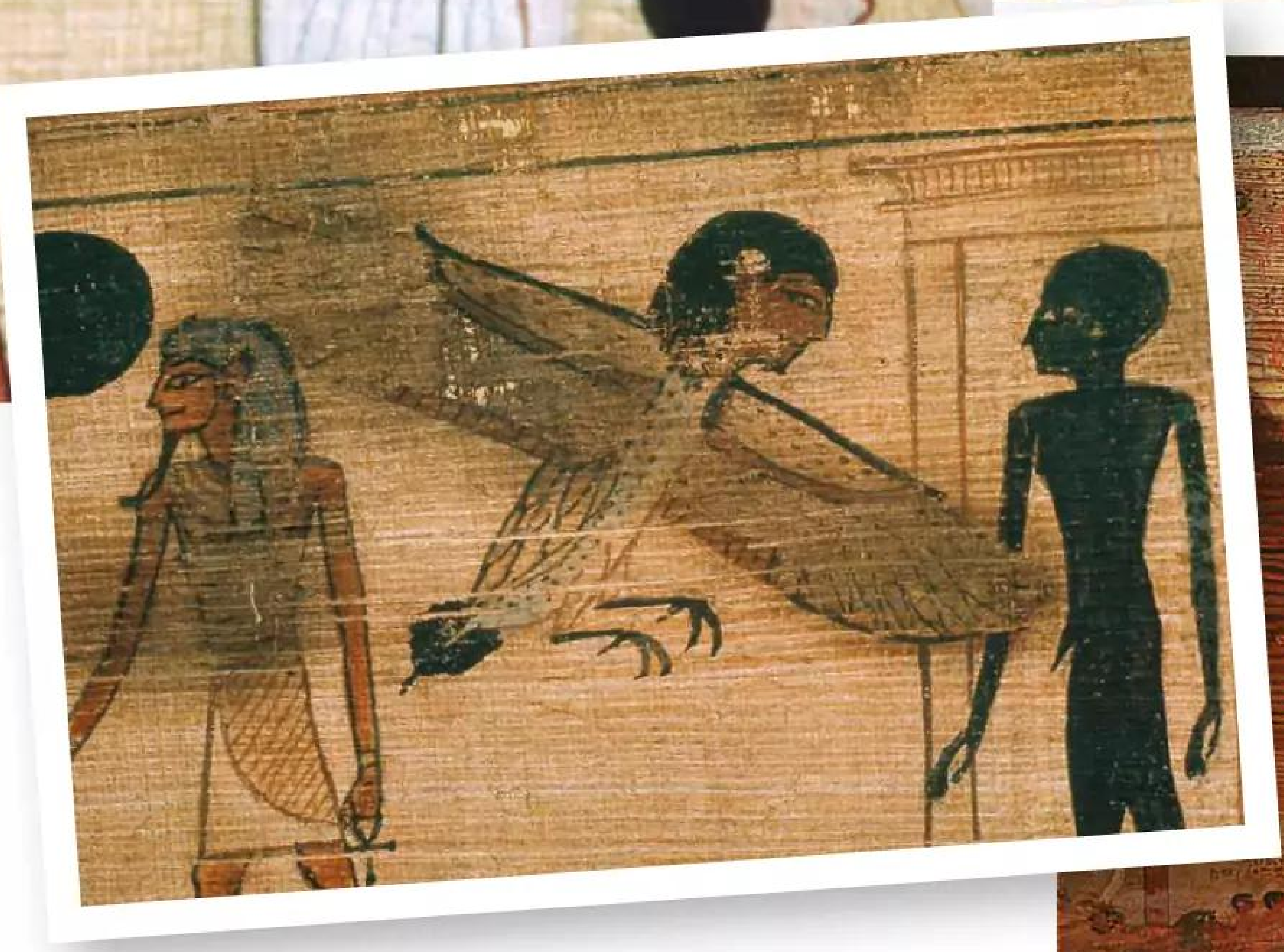
## DID YOU KNOW?

**TIP OF THE ICEBERG**

Although the three pyramids of Giza are world famous, well over 100 pyramids have so far been found in Egypt, most much smaller and many partly destroyed so are far less well-known.



A priest wearing the mask of the jackal-god Anubis supports the mummified body of the scribe Hunefer, while other priests perform the Opening of the Mouth ceremony to prepare his soul for the Afterlife; his wife Nasha stands before him in mourning



ABOVE: **Body and soul (the shadow and the human-headed ba bird) shown at the tomb in Spell 92 in the Book of the Dead of Neferrenpet**

ABOVE RIGHT: **Coffins were even decorated with maps of the Underworld**

During the long history of Ancient Egypt – spanning approximately 3000 BC to 30 BC – both the pharaohs and their subjects regarded life and death as part of a continuous process. Death was not an end, but the beginning of another stage: the 'Afterlife'.

This was considered possible because it was believed that each person was made up of both physical and invisible parts – their name, their body and its shadow, plus their life-force (known as the 'ka') and their spirit ('ba'). With these separate elements brought together at birth to work together during a person's lifetime, death was simply a transition, after which the ka and ba lived on.

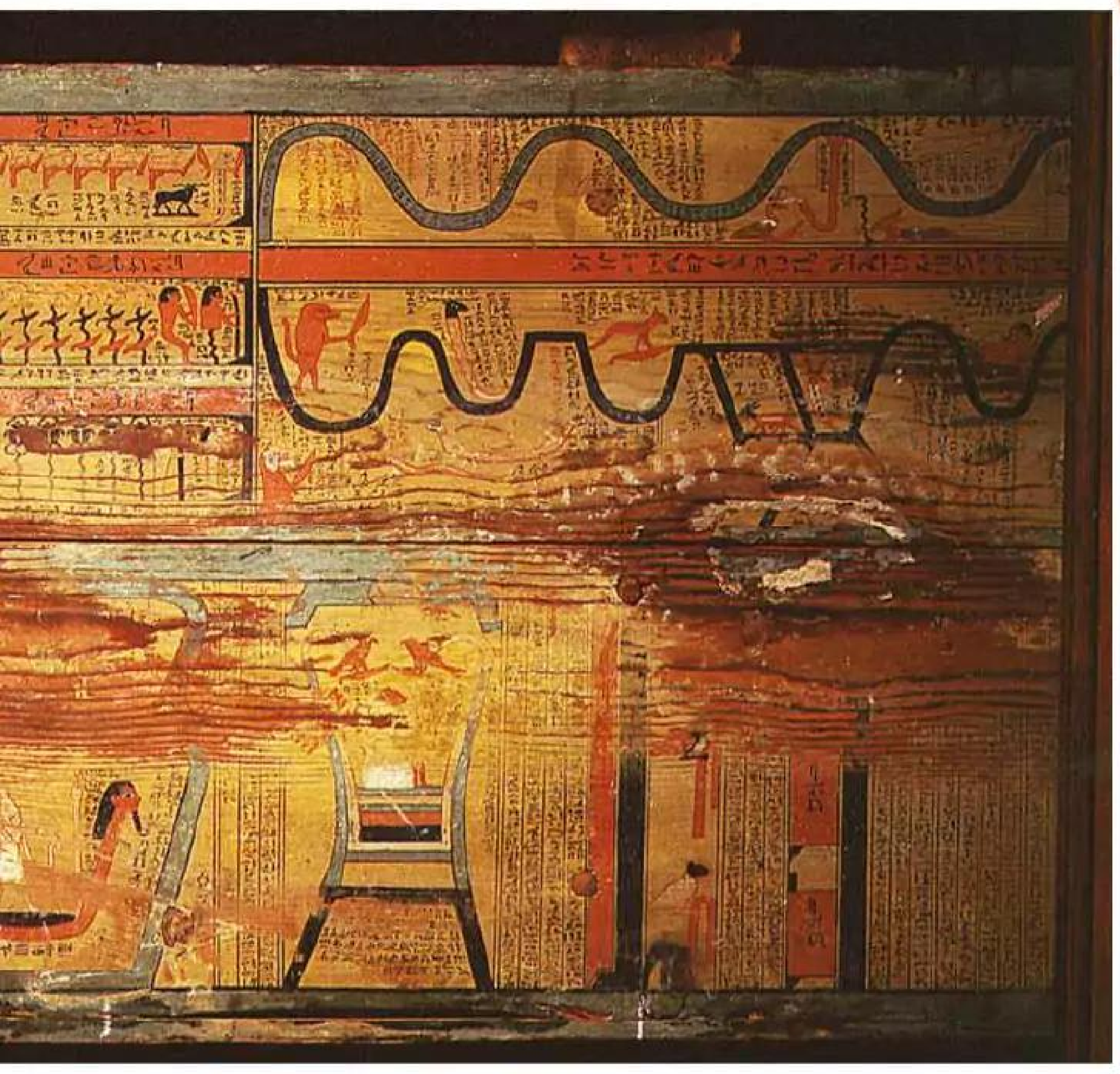
Yet the ka and ba still needed the body as their home, so it was preserved by mummification. The mummified body was placed in its coffin for elaborate funerary rites, which culminated in the 'Opening of the Mouth', a ceremony designed to reanimate the senses and the ka and the ba.

The 'reactivated' body was then placed inside its tomb, inscribed with the tomb owner's name and surrounded by everything that person had used in life, and accompanied by other objects made especially for burial – including statues of the deceased so that if the body was damaged by robbers, the ka and ba could relocate to the figures and live on. Spells known as the 'Book of the Dead' were also provided in order to help the ka and ba, which were also nourished by offerings of food and drink in the belief that "your ka sits with you and eats bread with you". The ba, too, required 'bread, water and air', but in contrast to the earthbound ka, the ba could travel around, leaving the tomb at sunrise but returning each night using the spell "ensuring that my ba comes to me from wherever it might be, and seeing its body alights on its mummy".

Usually depicted in the form of a human-headed bird, it was also thought that the ba could shapeshift by reciting the "spell for being transformed into any shape, becoming a living ba and taking the form of whatever you desire". It was also the ba which made the hazardous journey into the 'Underworld', for which the Book of the Dead acted as a kind of guidebook – providing useful phrases and maps of the Underworld's various regions and gateways. It also gave the names of the snakes and demons guarding these gateways, ranging from 'Stinger' and 'Flame-eyed' to 'Existing on Maggots' – the deceased were only allowed to pass through by speaking these names and declaring that "I know them and am excellent in opening the

"THE BOOK OF THE DEAD ACTED AS A KIND OF A GUIDE TO THE UNDERWORLD'S VARIOUS REGIONS"

GETTY IMAGES X7, ALAMY X1



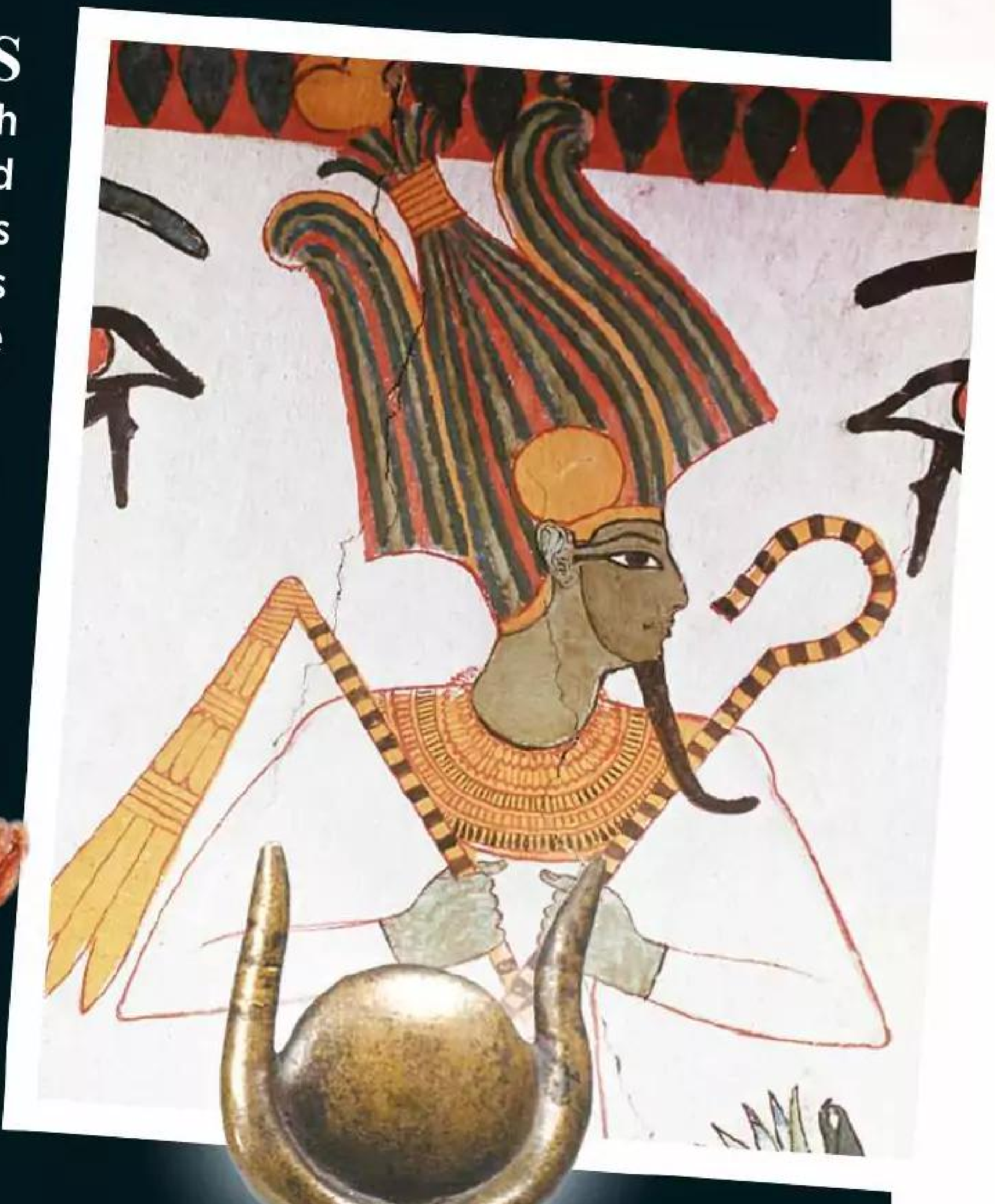
gateways". Beyond each gateway were even more terrifying forces ready to "sever heads, slit throats and rip out hearts", but these could be avoided by reciting the spell, "You will not catch me in your net in which you catch the dead!"

The ultimate defender of the dead was the great sun god Ra, ably assisted by 12 fearsome goddesses variously named 'Splitter of the skulls of Ra's enemies', 'Slicer of Souls' and 'Beheader of Rebels'. There was also Ra's daughter, Hathor, the smiling goddess of love, who took the dead into her protective embrace, while the sky goddess Nut was the one who "spreads herself over you, protecting you from harm" and known

Continues on p42

## DEITIES OF THE UNDERWORLD

Who oversaw the deceased's journey to the next life?

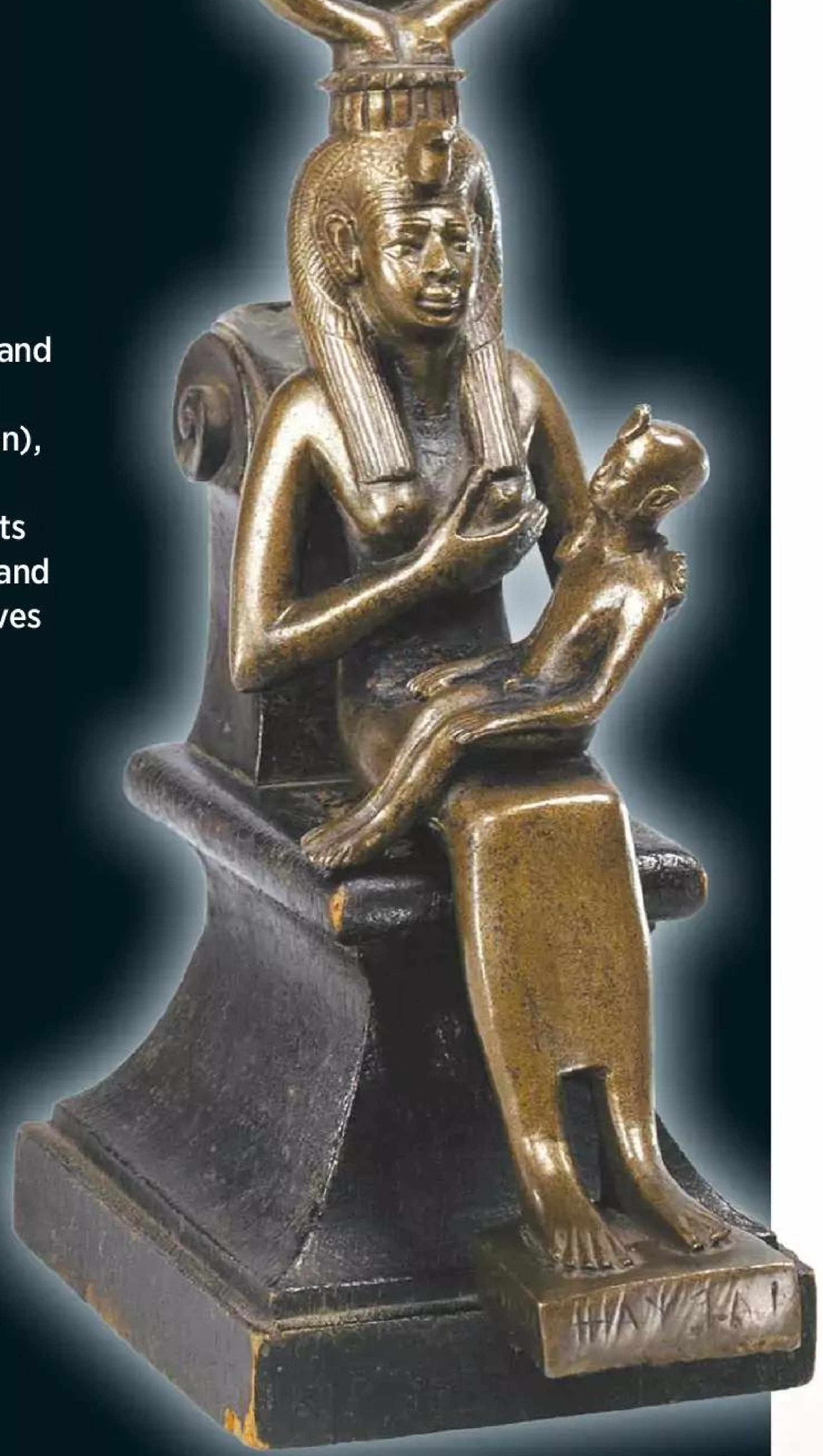


**OSIRIS**

▶ At death mummified and resurrected by his wife Isis, Osiris became Lord of the Underworld and chief judge of the dead. His green face references his role as god of fertility as well as new life

**ANUBIS**

◀ The black jackal god and guardian of cemeteries (where jackals were seen), assisted Isis when she mummified Osiris. Priests overseeing embalming and funerals would themselves wear a mask of Anubis



**DID YOU KNOW?**

**A UNIQUE FIND**

The only mask of the jackal god Anubis once worn by funerary priests and leaving the mouth free to read out funerary texts was identified in 2001. It is now displayed at Harrogate Museum in North Yorkshire.

**ISIS**

◀ The great mother goddess and magician who invented mummification for her dead husband Osiris, resurrecting him to become god of the Underworld while she protected their son, ruling on Earth

## GUIDE TO MAKING A MUMMY

Mummification was an expensive process carried out by skilled embalmers over 70 days. Although it changed gradually over time, it always featured the same basic steps…

**1** The body was washed, then a metal probe inserted up the nose to liquify the brain – which drained away.

**2** A small cut was made in the left side to remove the digestive organs responsible for decomposition.

**3** The intestines, stomach, liver and lungs were treated and buried separately in four Canopic jars (but the heart was left in place since it was believed to contain intelligence and emotion).

**4** The body was dried out for 40 days using a natural salt called natron.

**5** The skin was rubbed with oils and resins to provide a protective coating against 'harmful forces', including insects, mould and bacteria.

**6** The body was wrapped in many layers of linen wrappings and put in its coffin for burial.

### DID YOU KNOW?

**A LONG TIME IN THE MAKING**

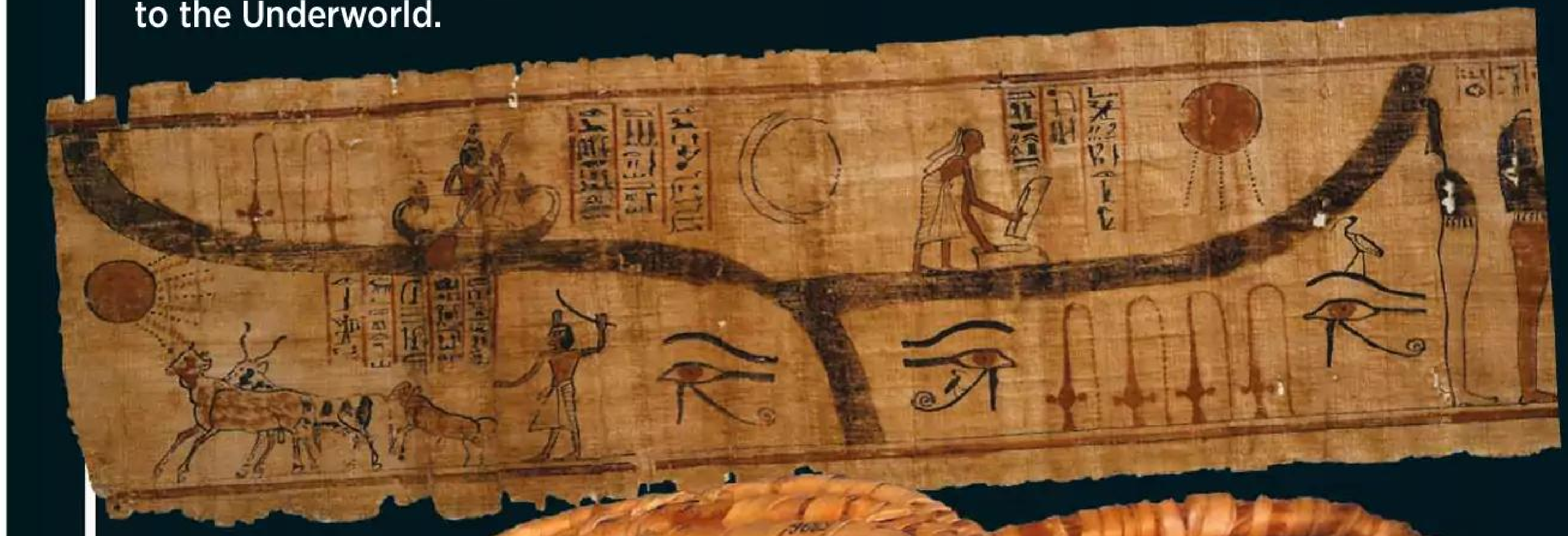
Scientists analysing mummy wrappings in 2014 were able to prove that mummification began in Egypt in around 4300 BC – so 1,700 years earlier than believed'

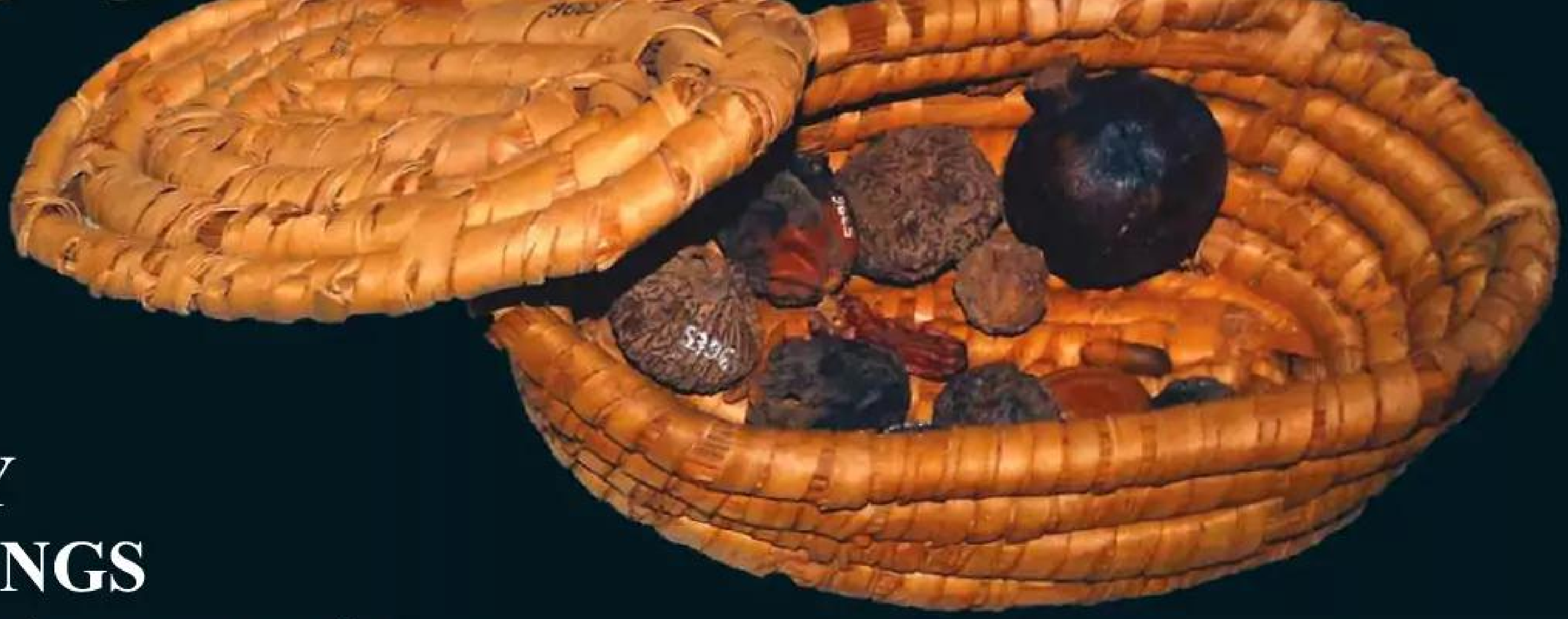
## PREPARING FOR DEATH

When packing for the Afterlife, there were some essential items needed for the journey

### BOOK OF THE DEAD

▼ Since the dead had to find their way through the Underworld to reach eternity, collections of spells and prayers known as the Book of the Dead were written on papyrus rolls, acting as guide books to the Underworld.





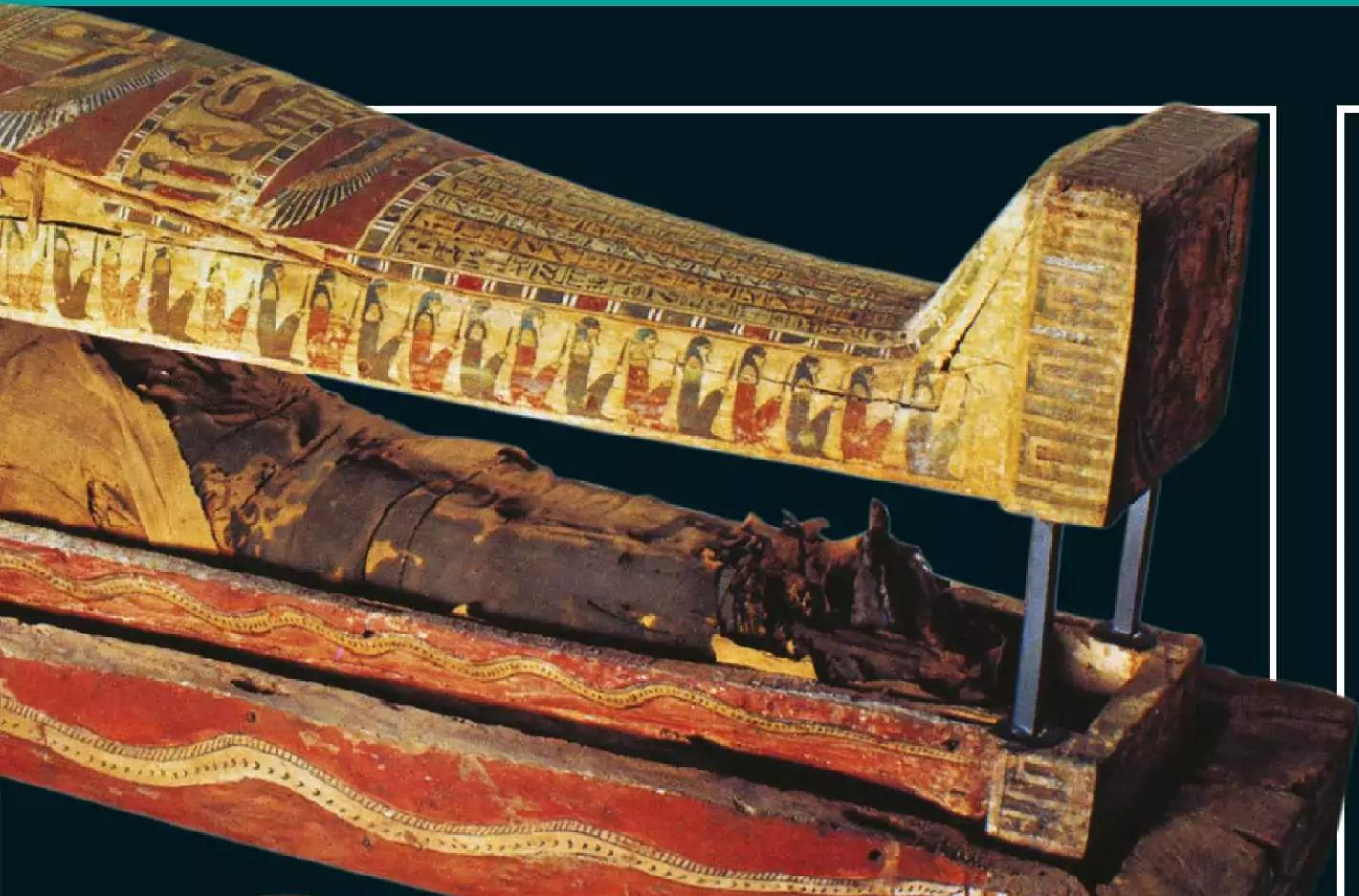
### MUMMY WRAPPINGS

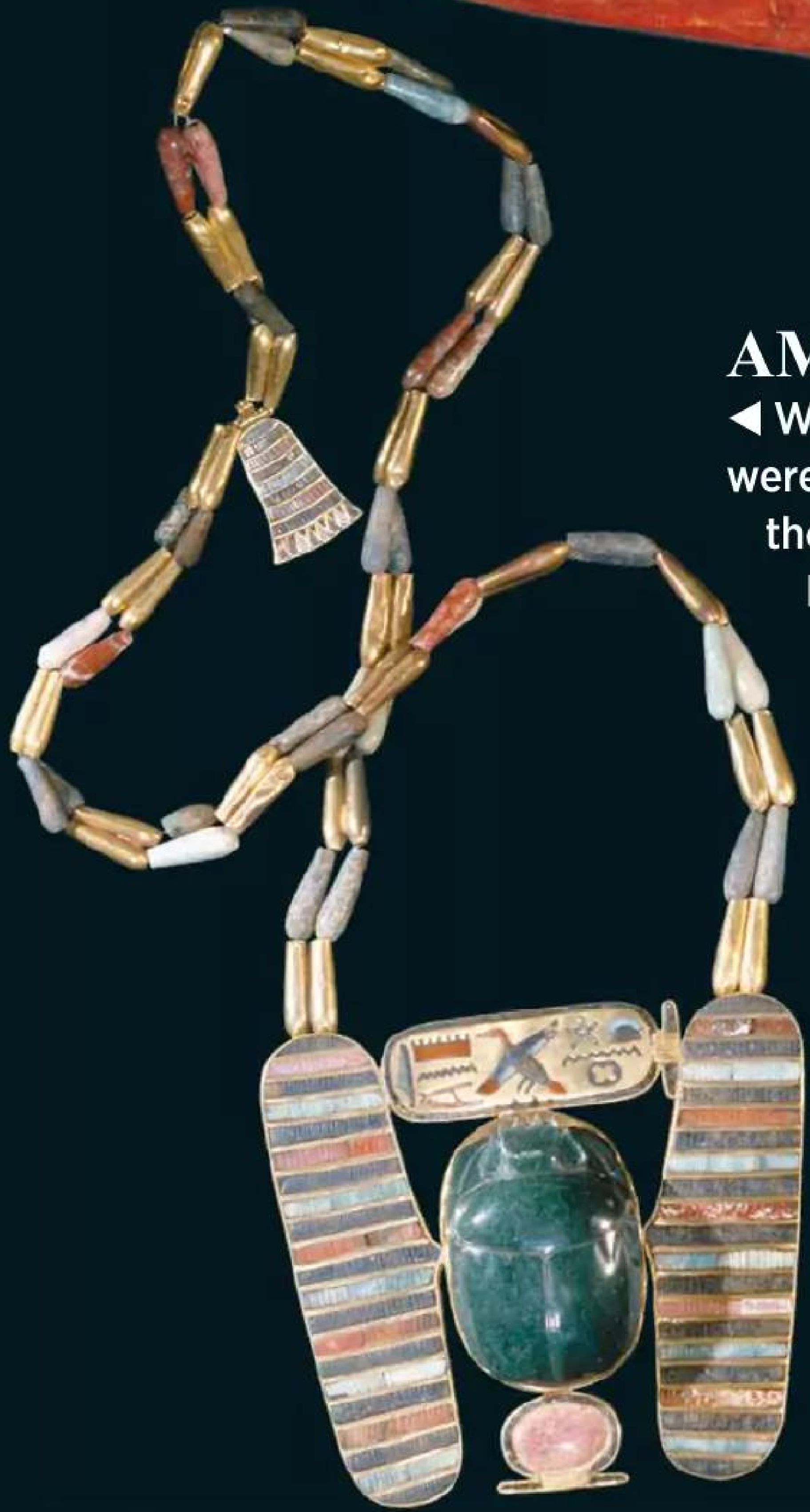
▼ In terms of the correct 'outfit' for the journey, the Book of the Dead states that those wishing to reach the Afterlife must be "pure, clean, clothed in fresh linen and anointed with the finest myrrh oil", referring to the many layers of mummy wrappings protecting the body from damage.

### FOOD & DRINK

▲ Supplies for the long journey to the Underworld and for the Afterlife beyond were accompanied by the prayer "may there be given offerings of bread, beer, beef and fowl and every good and pure thing for your ka".

ALAMY X3, GETTY IMAGES X6, TOPFOTO X1



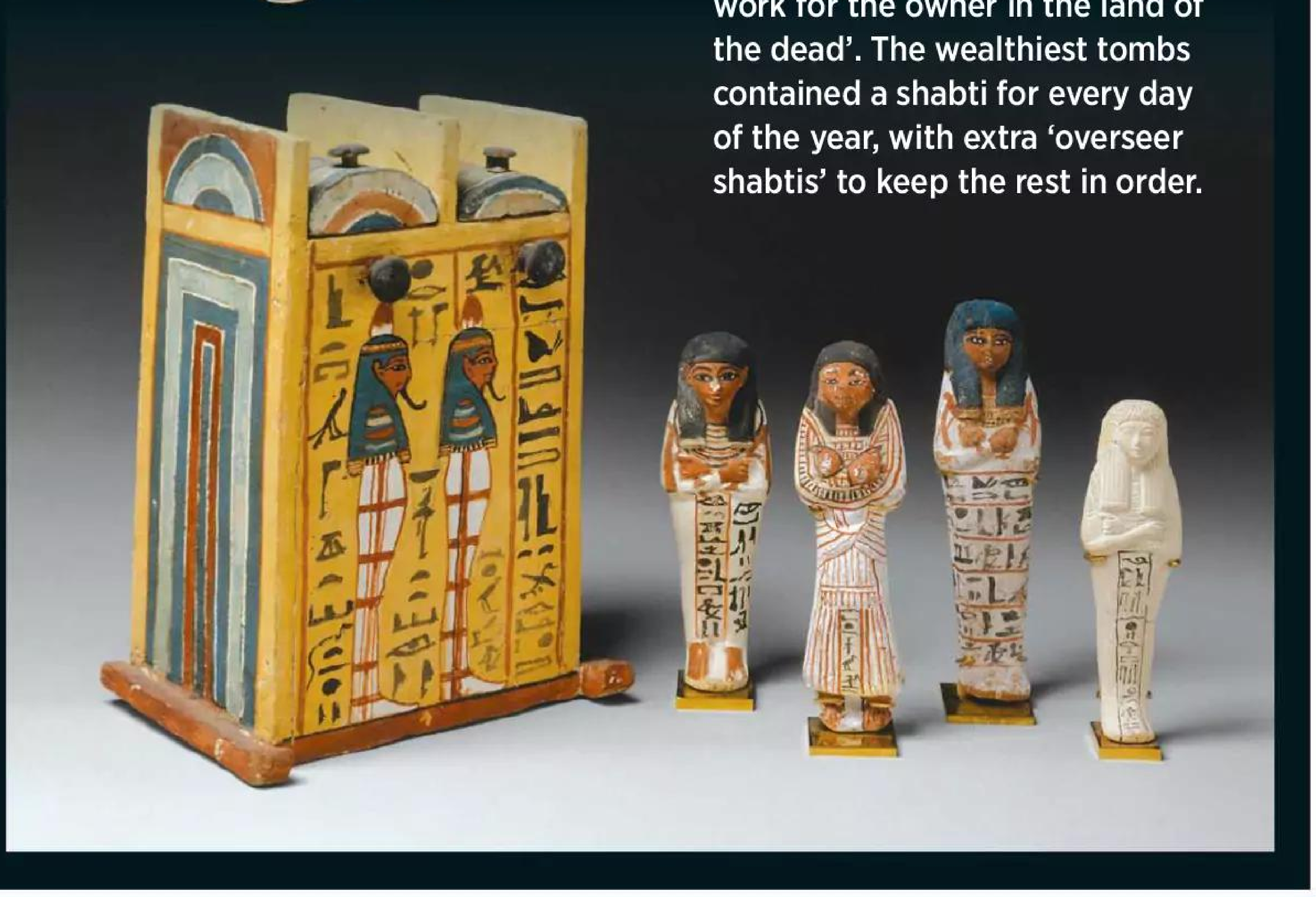


### AMULETS

◀ Worn in both life and death, amulets were not only decorative but were thought to protect against harm. Placed over different parts of the body, a whole series of protective amulets included the Eye of Horus, worn to keep the body healthy and complete, and large scarabs (beetle-shaped amulets) placed over the heart.

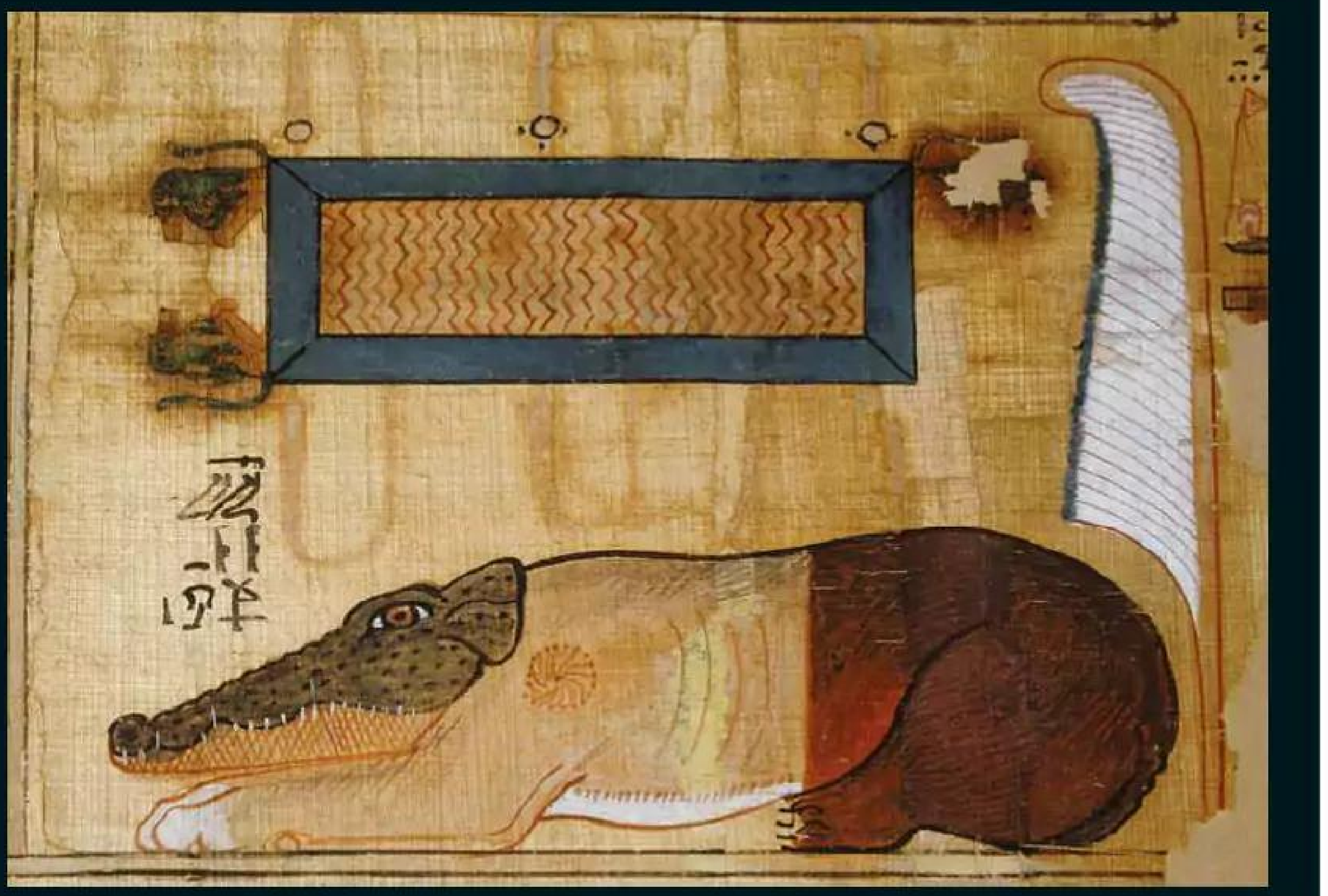
### SHABTIS

▼ No one wants to work for eternity, so many ancient Egyptians were buried with small servant figurines, or 'shabtis', and the 'Spell for making a shabti do work for the owner in the land of the dead'. The wealthiest tombs contained a shabti for every day of the year, with extra 'overseer shabtis' to keep the rest in order.



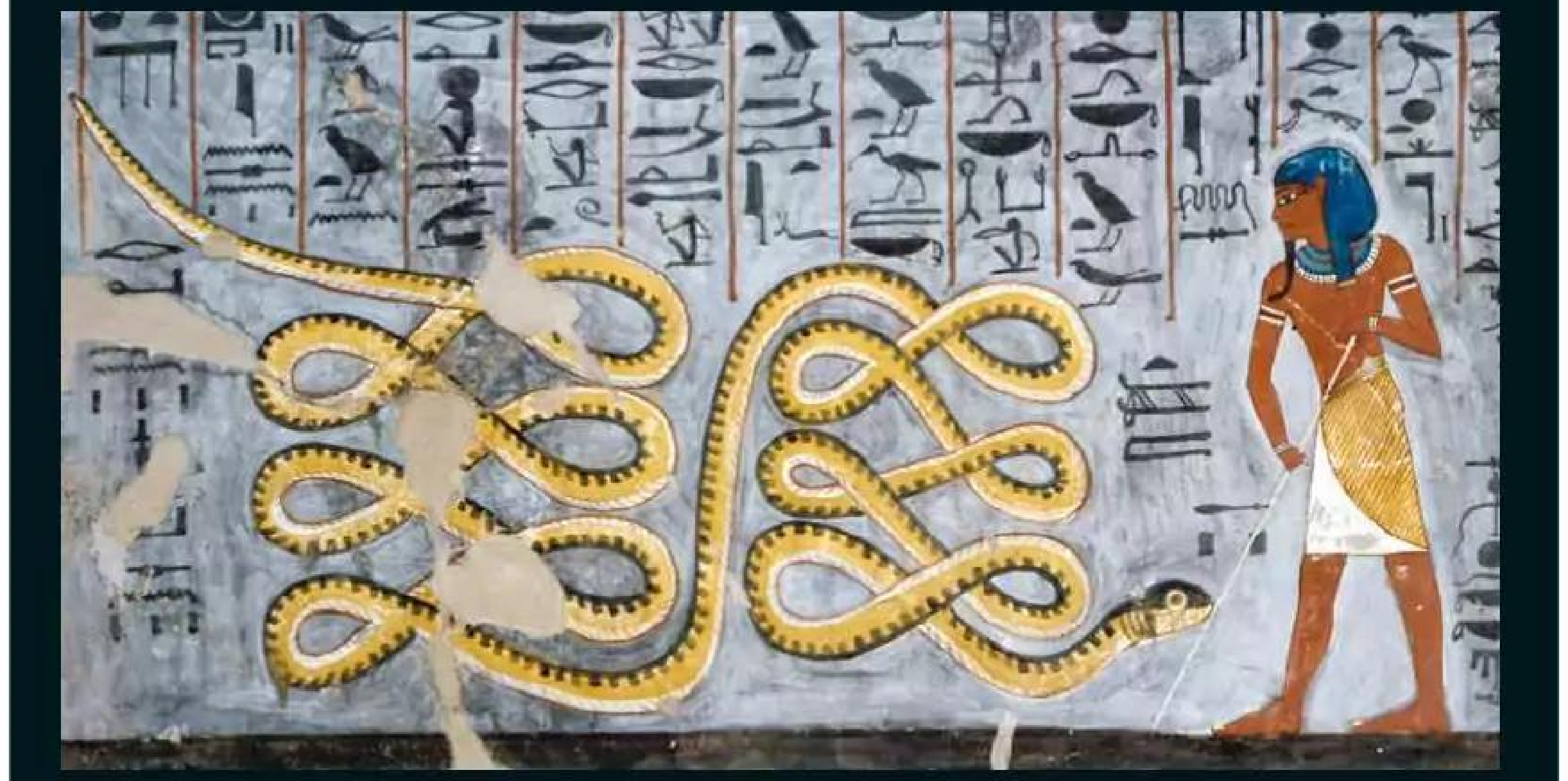
## THE MOST TERRIFYING CREATURES FROM THE BOOK OF THE DEAD

Reaching the Afterlife meant getting past these fearsome guardians



### AMMUT

▲ 'Devourer of the Dead' was a terrifying goddess with a crocodile's head, lion's body and the back legs of a hippopotamus. She waited by the scales of Judgement to eat the hearts of sinners.

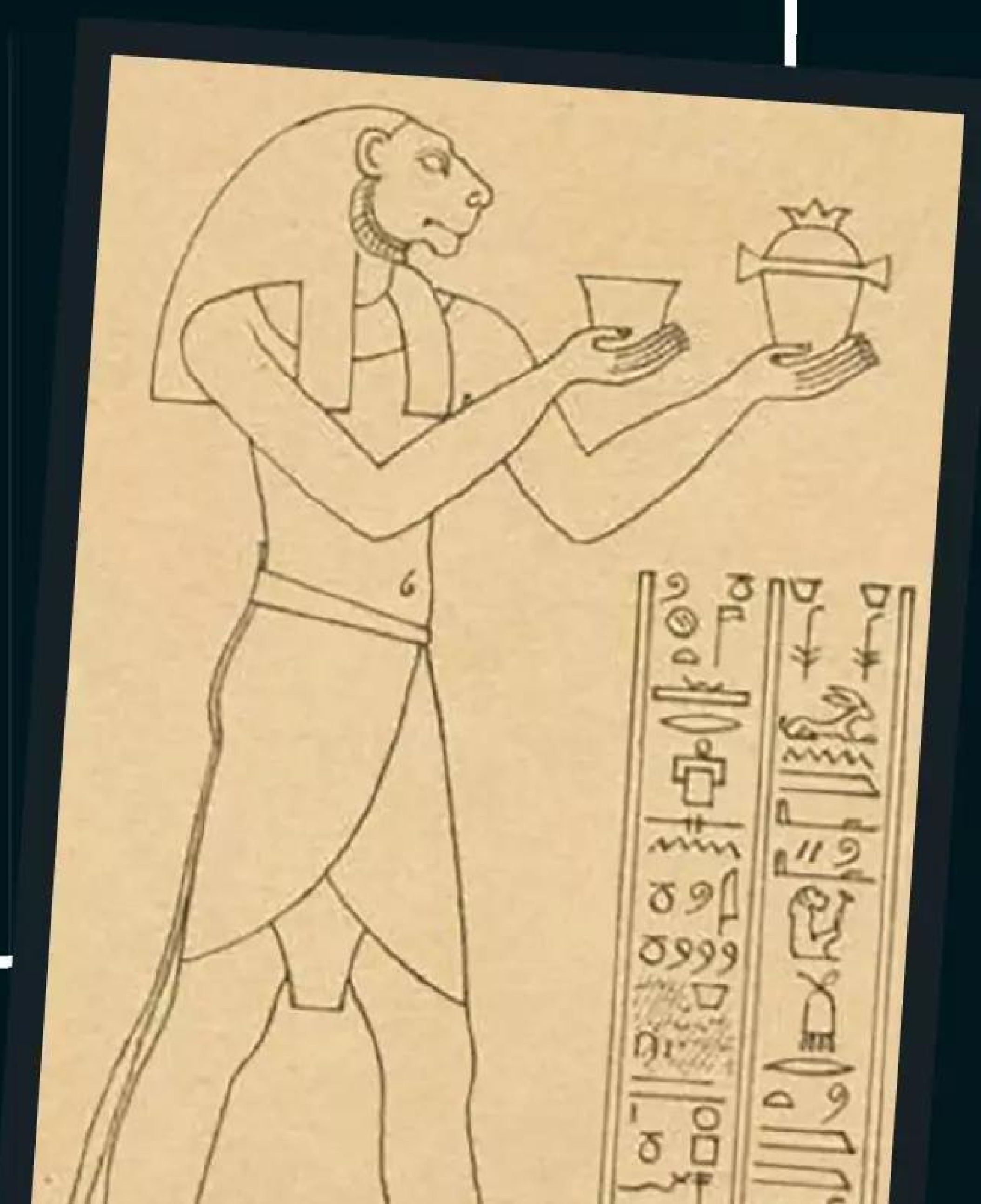


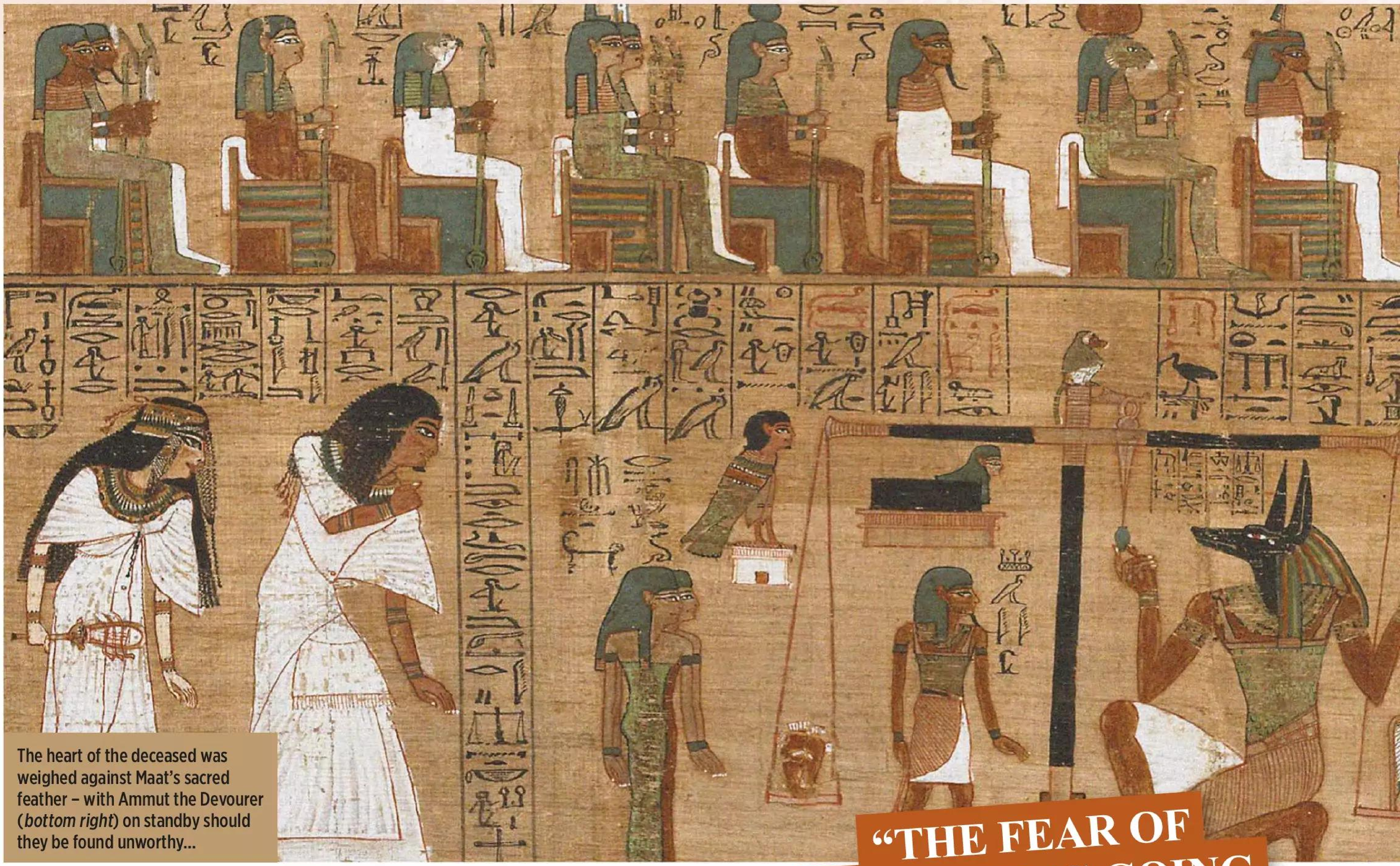
### APEP

▲ The 'Eater of Souls' was the great roaring serpent who tried to swallow the Sun god Ra each night to prevent him rising again, plunging the world into darkness and chaos unless constantly fought against.

### SHEZMU

▶ The 'Lord of Blood' hunted sinners for slaughter. He was also a butcher known as 'the One who dismembers bodies' and used a wine press to crush human heads instead of grapes.





The heart of the deceased was weighed against Maat's sacred feather – with Ammut the Devourer (*bottom right*) on standby should they be found unworthy...

◀ for her thunderous laughter. Even Osiris, the Lord of the Underworld, was described as "laughter-loving", and it was he who awaited the dead at their final destination: the Hall of Two Truths, presided over by Maat, goddess of truth.

Here, Osiris took the role of chief judge, assisted by 42 'Assessor Gods' – whose individual names had to be recited by the deceased as part of the 'Negative Confession' speech, declaring that they hadn't committed any of the sins on a long list, from "I have not robbed the poor" to "I have not killed anyone". Fortunately there was yet another helpful advice section in the Book of the Dead entitled "this is how to act in the Hall of the Two Truths when saying this speech".

Then came the most dramatic part of the judgement, when the deceased's heart was weighed against Maat's sacred feather. If the heart was found heavy with sin it was thrown as food to a monster, Ammut the Devourer, condemning its owner to permanent oblivion. But if the heart was as light as the feather, the deceased was declared 'true of voice' and allowed to pass through into a blissful eternity, their ba uniting with their ka to create a transfigured spirit or 'akh'.

Living forever in the company of the gods, the akh's eternal destination was sometimes imagined as a celestial existence among 'the Imperishable Stars', or travelling beside the sun god to be reborn each dawn. Or it could simply be to continue to live with loved ones as they had on earth, in a heavenly landscape duplicating Egypt itself: "You settle in the next world, striding about the land, your heart happy as you plough and go sailing as your heart wishes, going out each morning and returning each evening…. You see the sun god in heaven, watching as he dawns and waking joyfully each day, travelling through eternity with a heart filled with happiness!"

## DEATH BEGINS IN LIFE

This long journey towards eternity had to begin in life, with all necessary preparations made for a safe passage into the next world. With the fear of something going wrong after death far more powerful than the fear of death itself, the desire for a proper burial was every Egyptian's ultimate goal. Nothing was left to chance.

First came the choosing of a burial place: usually on the west bank of the

"THE FEAR OF SOMETHING GOING WRONG AFTER DEATH WAS MORE POWERFUL THAN THE FEAR OF DEATH ITSELF"

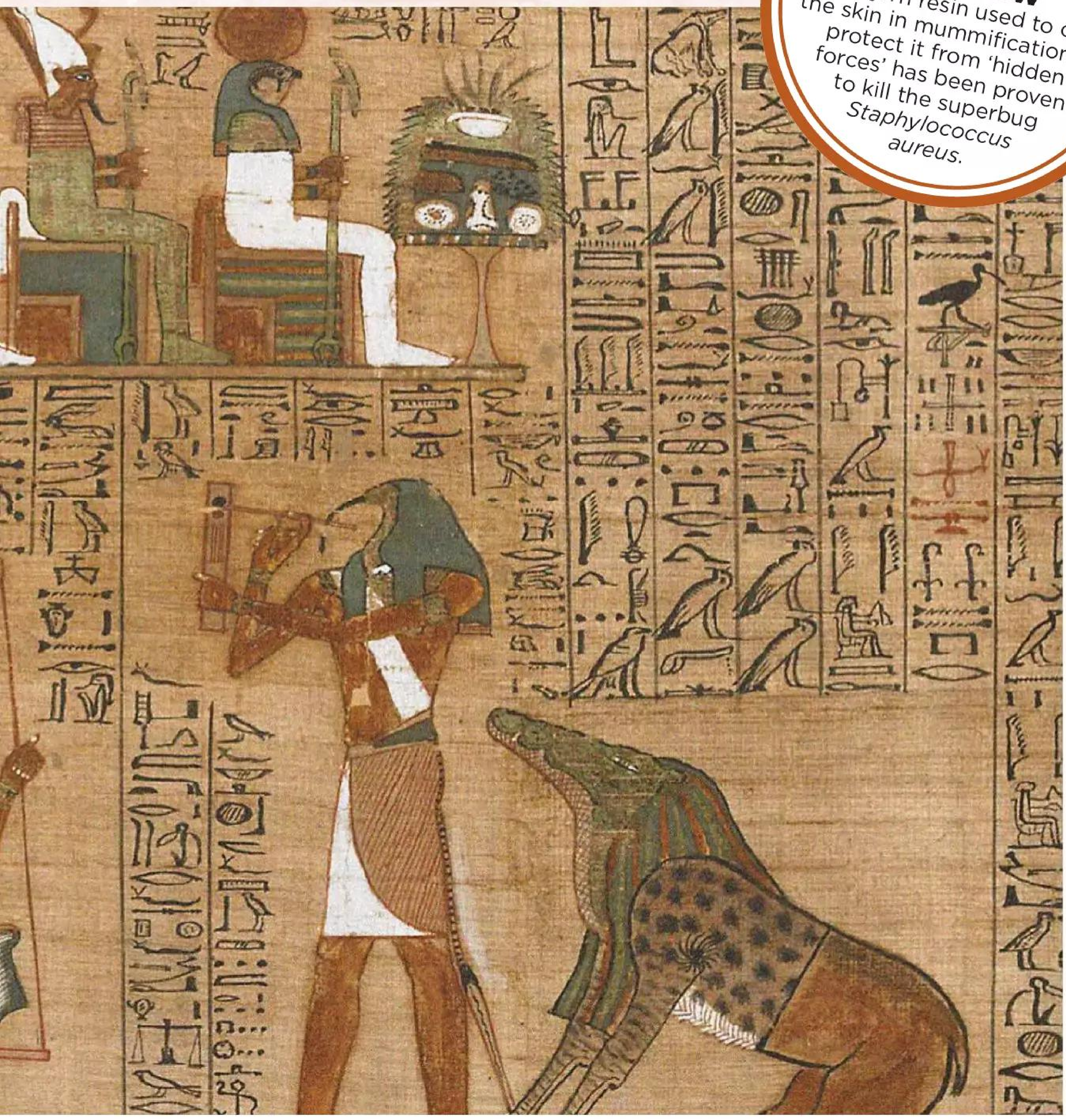
Many tombs of Egypt's ancient royalty have been found behind the Theban Hills here, in areas now known as the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens. The tombs of non-royal people can be seen in the foreground

GETTY IMAGES X5, COURTESY LEEDS MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES X1

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**THE MYRRH YOU KNOW**

The myrrh resin used to coat the skin in mummification to protect it from 'hidden forces' has been proven to kill the superbug *Staphylococcus aureus.*



Egyptian priest Nesyamun's vocal chords were scanned

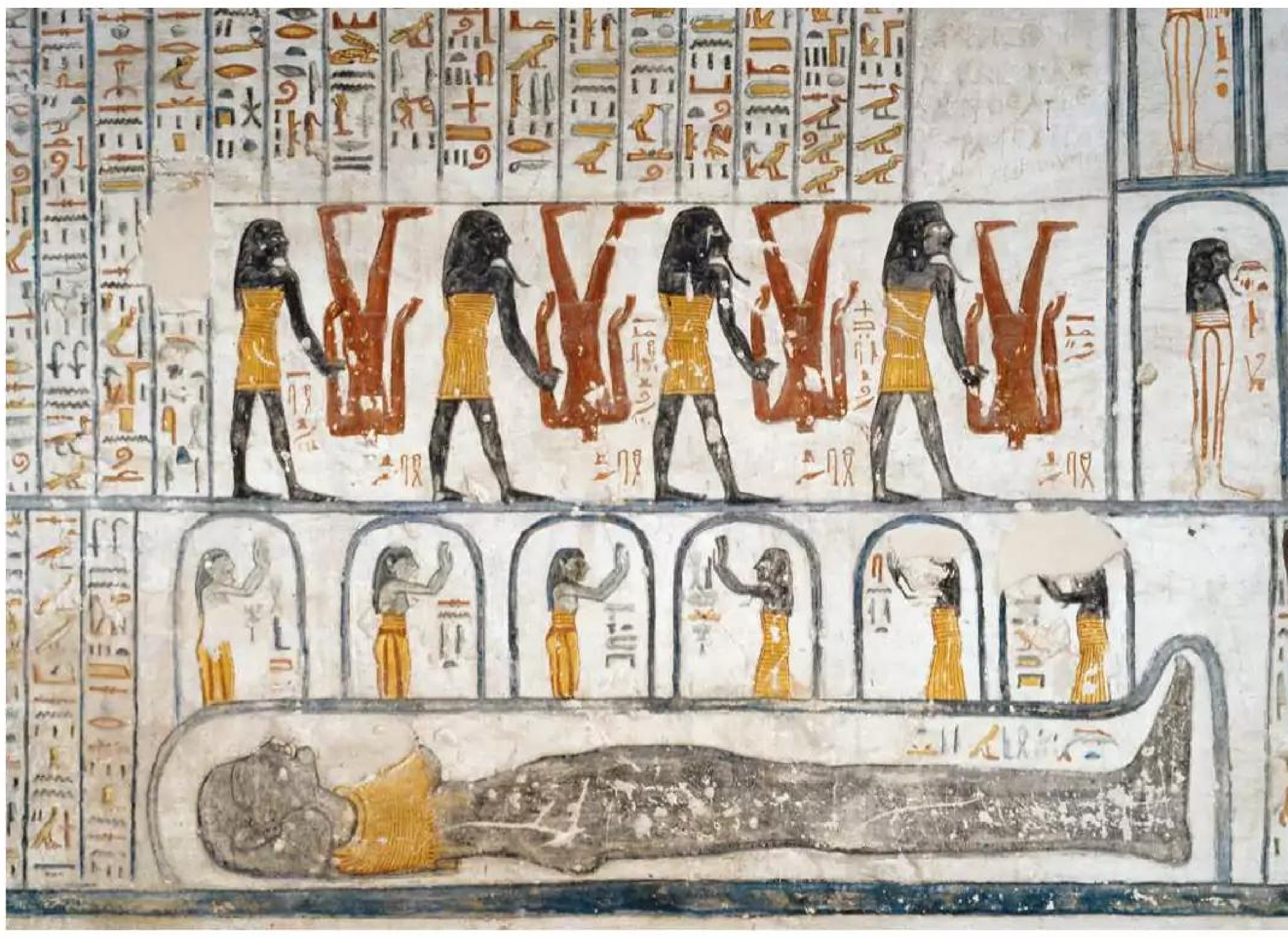
## VOICES OF THE DEAD

Thanks to modern technology we can listen to the sound of the voice of a priest who lived over 3,000 years ago

In the next world, the Egyptian dead had to be able to speak to the gods and recite protective spells so they could become an eternal spirit, 'true of voice'. Now it's possible to hear them, using new technology combining a 3D printout of a vocal tract (based on CT scans), designed by Prof David Howard of Royal Holloway, University of London.

Since the vocal tract remains intact in mummified bodies, Howard worked with colleagues at the University of York, Leeds Museum and Leeds General Infirmary to recreate the 'voice' of mummified Egyptian priest Nesyamun, based on his own prayers wishing to speak to the gods – and allowing him to be heard after a 3,000 year silence. The technology, initially designed to help people who had lost their voice because of an accident or illness, recreated his exact vocal sound, since everyone's larynx is unique to them.

*Read more about the project, and 'hear' Nesyamun at bit.ly/2RBfg80*



ABOVE: **An 'Eye of Horus' was one of numerous amulets used to protect the dead**

ABOVE LEFT: **Carved wall scenes in the burial chamber of the tomb of Ramesses VI show the damned decapitated and hung upside down**

River Nile, where the sun appeared to set beneath the earth. "Make good your home in the grave-yard, make worthy your place in the west," was the recommendation during the Old Kingdom Pyramid Age (c2650-2200 BC). At this time pyramids were the standard form of tomb for kings and queens, surrounded by the smaller, bench-shaped 'mastaba' tombs of their officials so they could continue to serve in the next world. But pyramids were not only too costly to keep building, they were also an obvious target for robbers, despite warning inscriptions such as "as for anyone who dare lay a finger on this pyramid and on this temple which belong to me and my ka, then he will face the judgement of the gods. He will cease to exist, he will be one who is not, one who eats himself!"

With such curses failing to prevent tombs being ransacked and bodies destroyed, Egypt's rulers and their officials began to commission secret rock-cut tombs in and around the remote Valley of the Kings, from c1500 BC. Here, their bodies were buried after complex mummification involving yet more spells and incantations: hidden demons were driven off with the words "Be gone, creatures of darkness! See, the house of embalming is well guarded!" while the 'Spell for repelling a beetle' kept away flesh-eating insects.

Once anointed with insecticidal and antibacterial oils and resins, the body was wrapped in many layers of linen wrappings into which protective amulets were tucked at various points, activated

Continues on p46

# THE BOOK OF THE DEAD

## A handy guide to help your spirit make it to the afterlife

The world's oldest collection of religious texts are the hundreds of spells written inside some of Egypt's smaller pyramids between 2400-2100 BC. Only available to royalty, these spells were designed to help dead kings and queens reach the afterlife and spend eternity with the gods.

When royal power temporarily declined, the spells became available to more people and were written out on their coffins. These so-called 'Coffin Texts' included spells to protect the mummified body, advice for "not dying a second time" and "how not to rot and not to do work in the land of the dead", with maps showing routes to the next world. Eventually, these spells were written on rolls of papyrus, and they're now known as 'The Book of the Dead'. Sections of the text were read out during the mummification process and at the funeral; often, the rolled-up papyrus was placed beside the body in the coffin so it would be close at hand when needed. Personalised copies could be illustrated with colourful images of the deceased and the gods.

The journey to the afterlife was fraught with dangers from many sources – try your hand at our snakes and ladders game to find out what terrors could await an ancient Egyptian soul.

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A fearsome crocodile approaches but you repel it with a 'Spell for repelling a crocodile which comes to take away your magical power'

The powerful storm god Seth defends you and the Sun god Ra from the serpent Apep, god of chaos and destruction, impaling him with his great spear.

You forget the names of some of the 42 Assessor Gods who help Osiris judge your soul, so you must go back and learn these again.

Your shabtis – the small figurines you were buried with – take over your work in the Field of Reeds, leaving you free to enjoy your eternal paradise.

You forget the spell for escaping from the nets which catch unwary souls, and are temporarily trapped.

FINISH!
33
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Your heart is weighed against the feather of truth belonging to goddess Maat. It is found to be heavy with sin and will be fed to Ammut, the 'Devourer', causing you to die a permanent death.

Part of the Opening of the Mouth ritual was not performed properly. You are now unable to eat or drink during your journey to the Afterlife.

Your soul has reached the Field of Reeds and you are reunited with your deceased family, your possessions and your favourite cat in paradise.

Your show of respect toward the divine ferryman Heref-haef ('He who looks backwards') demonstrates your soul's worth and he agrees to transport you across the celestial river

You were buried without the heart scarab that would have prevented your heart from speaking out against you at the final judgment. Your entrance to paradise is not guaranteed.

ILLUSTRATION: RACHEL HATHAWAY

◀ by yet more spells. The most important amulet, placed over the heart, was a large 'heart scarab' inscribed with the spell "O heart, do not turn against me during the weighing of my heart, you are my ka at one with my body, who makes my body complete. Enter into happiness with me, and do not tell lies against me in the presence of the gods!". Finally, the mummified body would be placed in a set of decorated coffins – with those made for royalty covered in gold to emphasise that the royal spirit would join with the sun god.

Most Egyptians were not royal, however: they were mainly farmers and manual workers, so had far more simple burials. Usually their bodies were wrapped in reed mats and placed in hollows in the desert sand – where, ironically, the extreme heat and dry conditions often preserved them better than the costliest mummification.

## WORDS OF GRIEF AND HOPE

Since all Egyptians shared the same desire for an afterlife, everyone was buried with as much funerary equipment as they could afford, even if this was only a few pots of food and drink and their modest belongings of tools, weapons, jewellery and cosmetics, plus a few amulets. Those who could afford it also had a stone grave marker ('stela'). The inscription on the small stela of the singer Neferhotep (c1800 BC) reveals that "his beloved friend the brick-carrier Nebsumenu had this made for him. Alas!".

## DID YOU KNOW?

**SMELL OF SUCCESS**

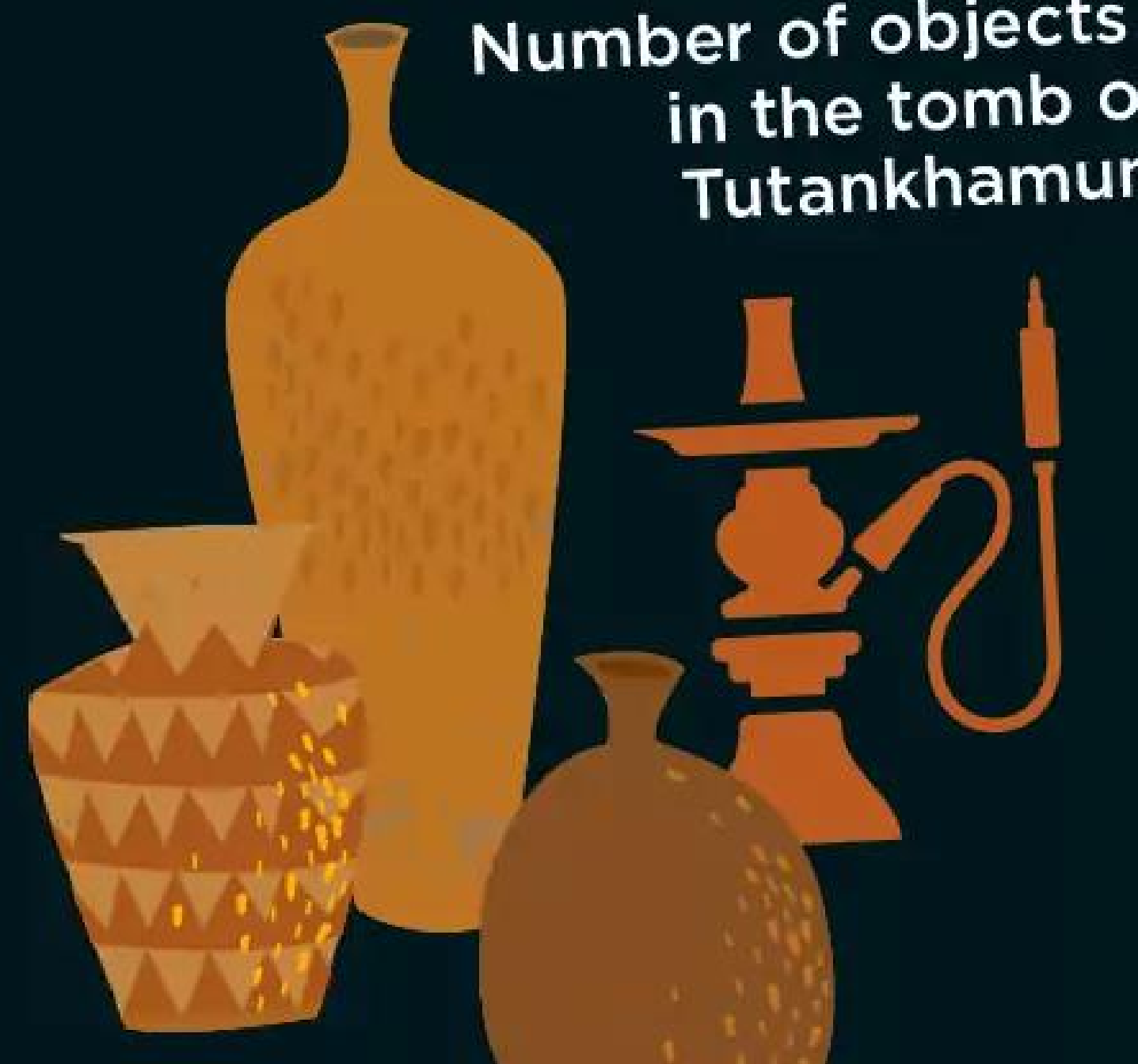
When archaeologists first enter tombs, the fragrance of the grave goods can still be strong – from perfumes from a royal funeral held around 2900 BC to the onions left as food offerings over 3,000 years ago!

# IN NUMBERS

Curious figures from the annals of ancient Egypt

**5,398**

Number of objects found in the tomb of Tutankhamun



**845**

Amount of linen (in square metres) used for the burial of the official Wah (c2000 BC), from his mummy wrappings to his coffin's linen coverings

**22.5**

Weight (in lbs) of Tutankhamun's death mask. That's equivalent to 10.23kg

**5,000**

Number of permanent, salaried employees thought to have built the Great Pyramid of Khufu at Giza (alongside up to 20,000 temporary workers)

**37**

Length (in metres) of the world's longest Book of the Dead, made in around 950 BC for Princess Nestanebisheru

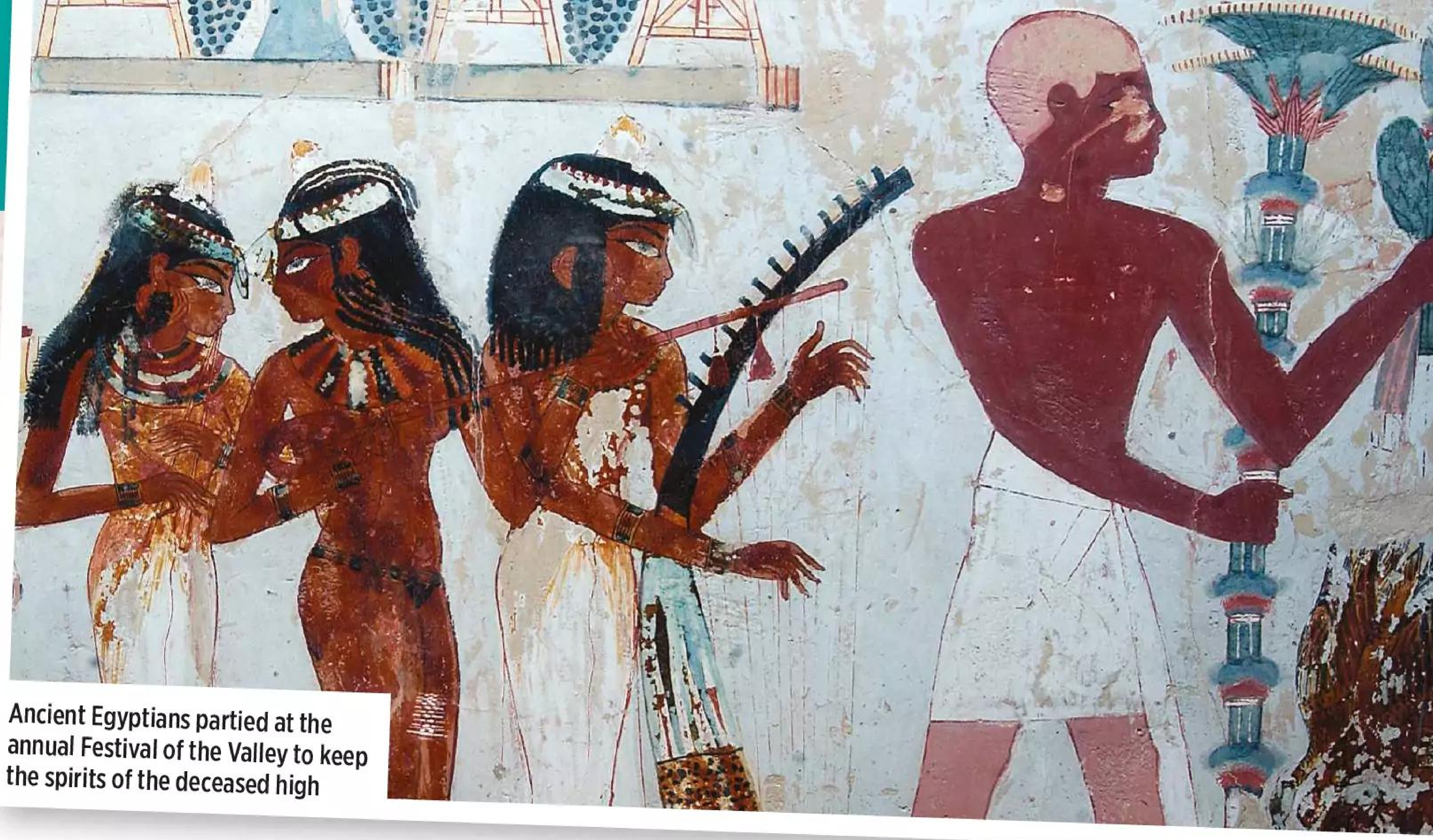
**3**

Cost of an illustrated Book of the Dead in donkeys – the equivalent of six months' wages

**12**

Price (in gold marks) paid for a kilogram of mummy powder for medicinal use in 1924.

GETTY IMAGES X4, AKG IMAGES X1



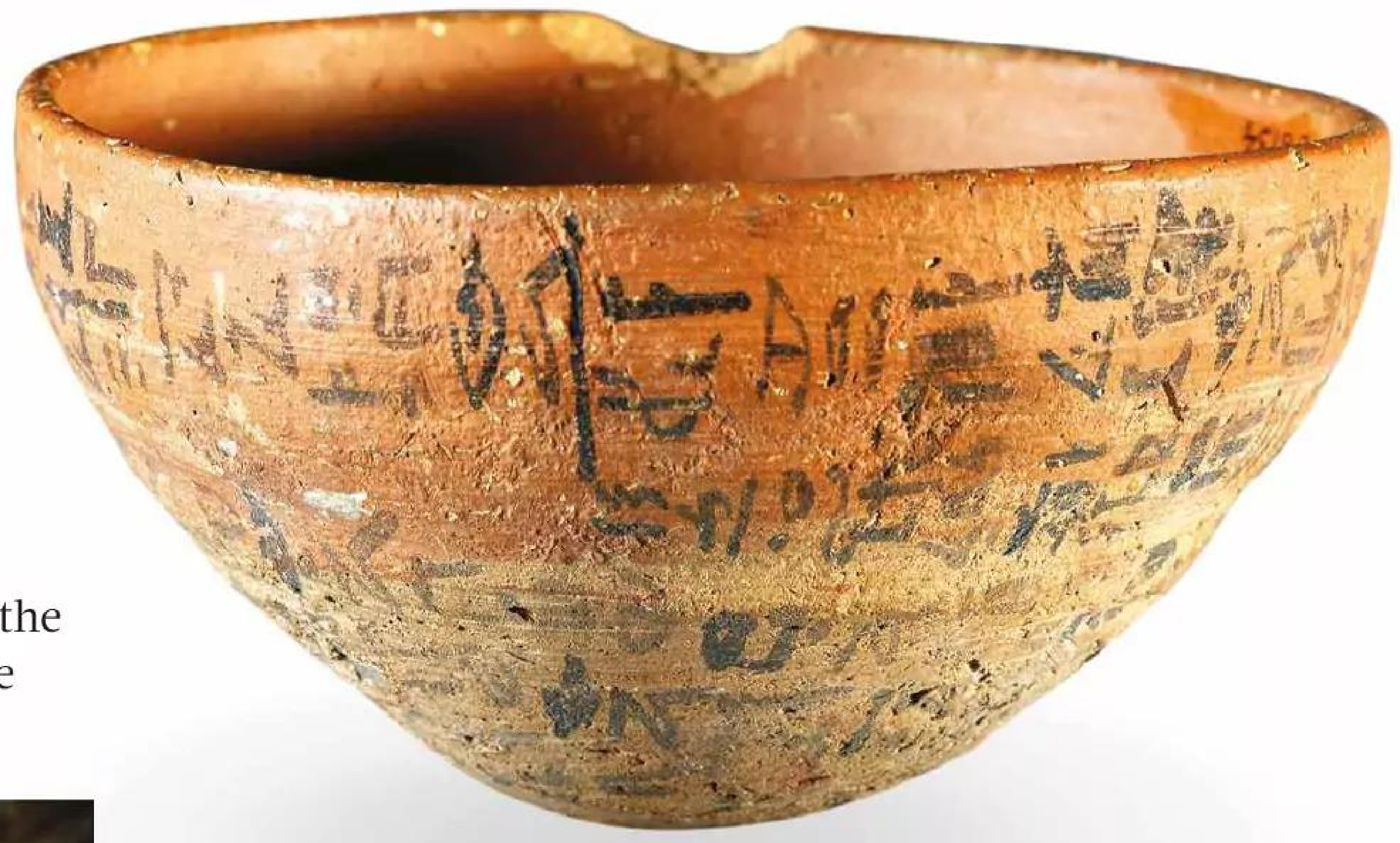
Ancient Egyptians partied at the annual Festival of the Valley to keep the spirits of the deceased high

Just as today, there was much sadness at the death of a friend or loved one. After receiving news of one pharaoh's death, a close ally had written to the royal widow: "I sat down and wept. I took neither food nor water but simply grieved"; courtiers are described with "hearts grieving and heads on knees as they mourned aloud", while a husband mourns a wife he calls "you beautiful one with no equal. My father and mother and sister and brother are good to me and have come to me, but you have been taken away from me!"

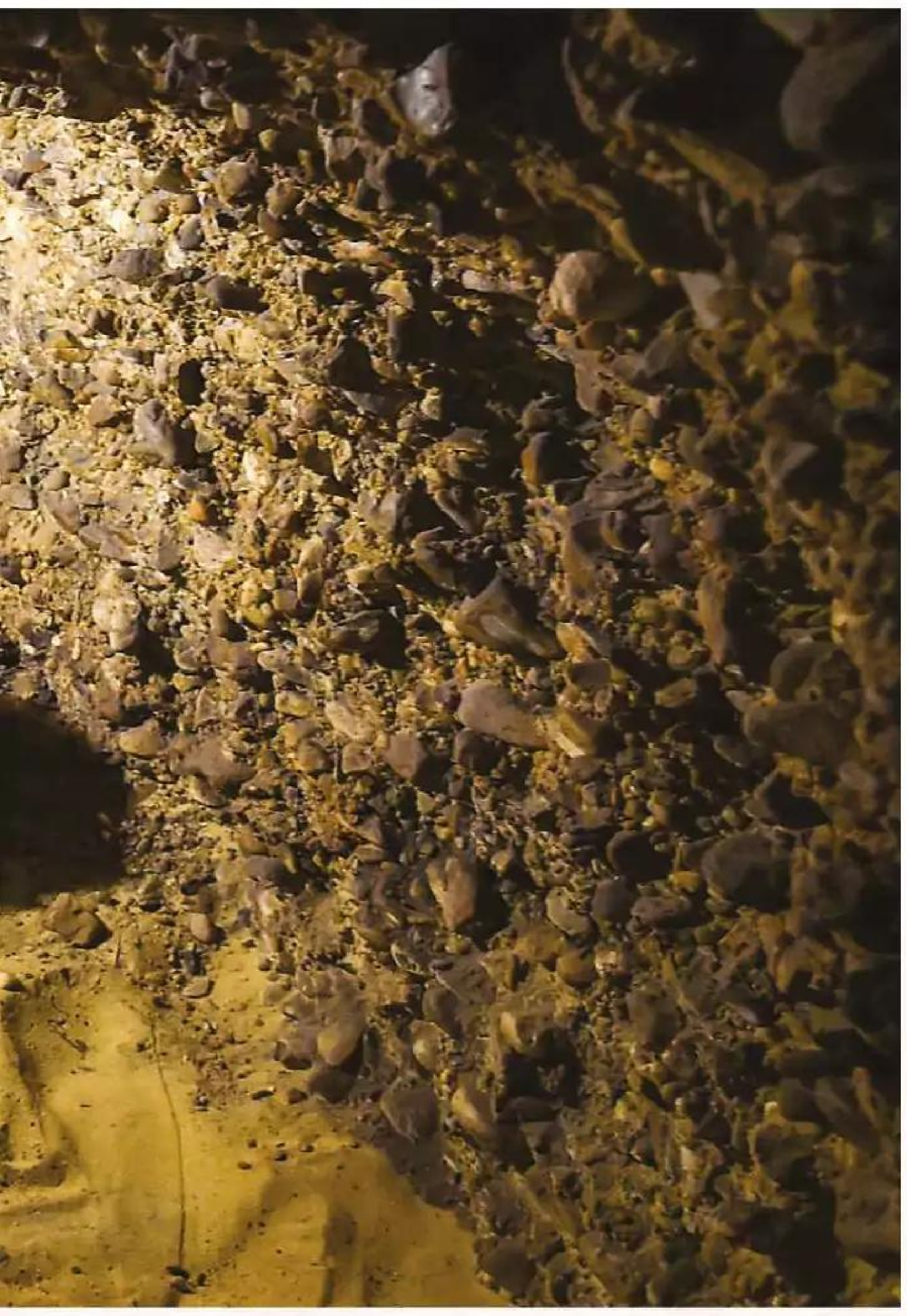
For some there was also uncertainty about the deceased's final destination. "None come back from there to describe it, to tell us of their needs and calm our hearts until we go where they have gone!" reads one tomb inscription, although other such texts are remarkably upbeat: "your heart is joyful, with a fine burial after a revered old age when you take your place in the coffin and come to the earth in your tomb in the west".

Most important to the dead, it was believed, were regular offerings of food and drink. The tomb inscriptions of Princess Nisedjerkai (c2500 BC) ask that offerings be given to her ka at every festival throughout the year, including at the 'Wag' festival, a kind of Egyptian Hallowe'en. More generally, at the annual Festival of the Valley held in Thebes (modern Luxor), people visited their family tombs to feast and make merry, believing that the sound of the party in full swing above would encourage their ancestors' spirits to come "back up into the world to see the rituals in the west before going back at their pleasure" according to one tomb inscription.

**"MOST IMPORTANT TO THE DEAD WERE REGULAR OFFERINGS OF FOOD AND DRINK"**



ABOVE: **Many objects could bear a missive: this terracotta bowl from around 2000 BC is inscribed with a letter from a woman named Merti to her dead son Mereri**



LEFT: **Not all burials were individual: this trio in a rock-hewn chamber within a larger tomb possibly belong to a family**

Yet sometimes the dead were not in a party mood. Transforming into avenging spirits, they could return at night to seek revenge on those who had wronged them in life, those who had failed to give them proper burial or even those who had robbed their tomb. Against such supernatural attacks, the living protected themselves by wearing amulets, praying to the gods, or consulting their local wise-woman familiar with the spirit world. Some even tried to make contact themselves by writing 'Letters to the Dead', asking their deceased relatives why they were angry and what could be done.

Believing that the dead also possessed magical powers ('heka'), the living often asked for their help when dealing with everything from getting pregnant to curing disease. One man wrote to his late wife: "Remember I am your beloved here on earth, so drive off this illness in my limbs. Appear as an akh in my dreams and I shall bring offerings for you when the sun rises". In another example, a housewife nags her dead husband to cure their servant: "She's ill, so why don't you fight for her night and day", adding that "if you don't help, the household will simply fall apart, so watch over her … then all will be well in your house. Listen to me!"

Sometimes, people just wanted to know how their dead loved ones were coping in the next world. One man asked his much-missed wife: "How are you? Is the West taking care of you properly?"

Such deeply felt beliefs were so powerful that they continued even when Egypt was taken over by the Greeks and Romans in the last few centuries BC, the invaders' bleak outlook on death having little impact on the Egyptians.

When 'The Book of Outlasting Eternity' was compiled in Egypt in Roman times, it still brought together traditional elements from the previous 3,000 years, with the wish: "May your soul live in the sky before Ra, may your ka be divine before the gods, may your body rest before Osiris, may your mummy be an akh before the living, your name in the mouths of those on earth in this book of outlasting eternity". ⊙

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**JOANN FLETCHER is Honorary Visiting Professor at the University of York. She specialises in mummification and makes regular TV appearances, including BBC Two's *Immortal Egypt with Joann Fletcher*. Her books include *The Story of Egypt* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2015)**

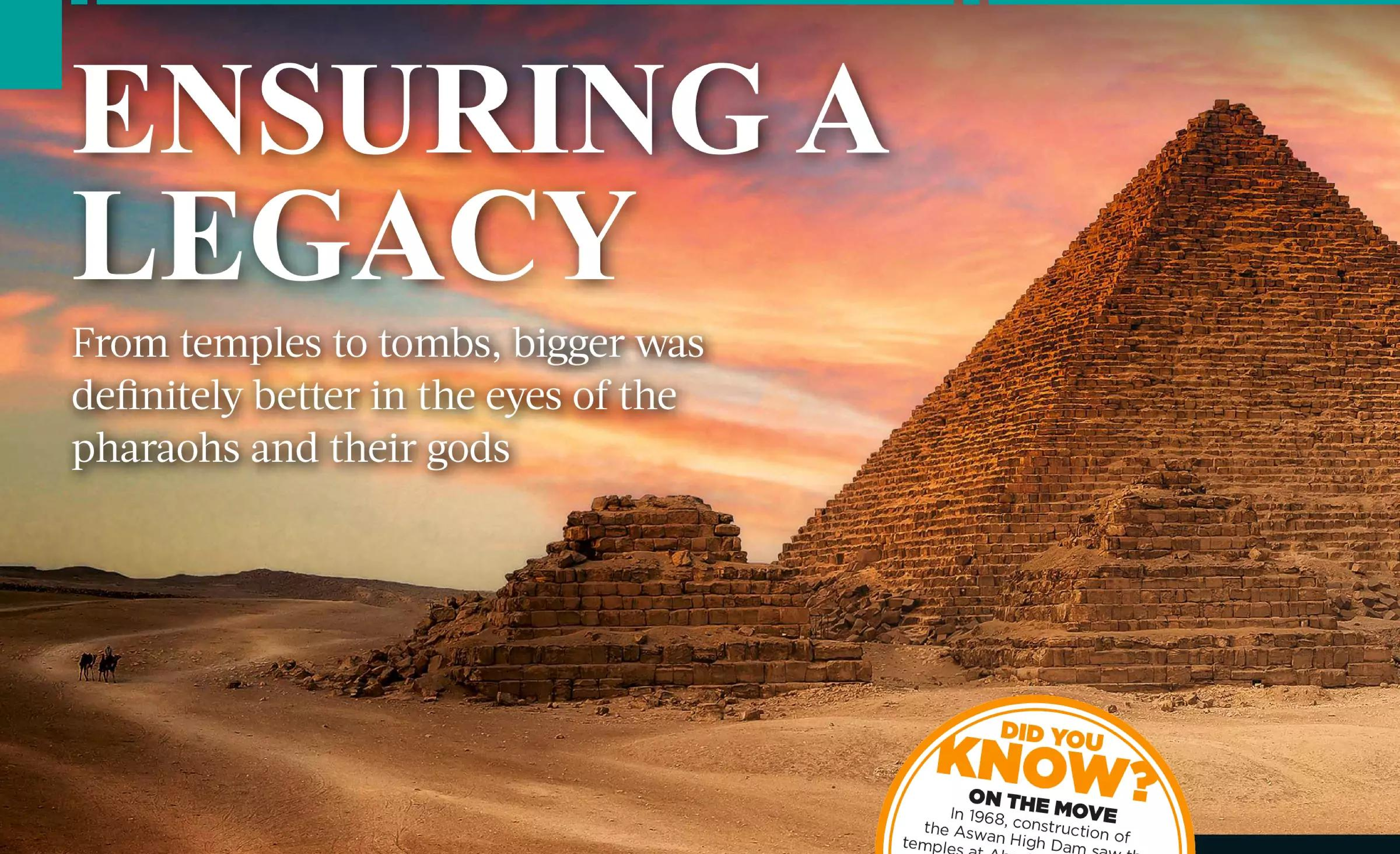
**GET HOOKED**

**LISTEN**

BBC RADIO 4 The Book of the Dead is discussed on an episode of *In Our Time*. *bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08n1y2v*

# ENSURING A LEGACY

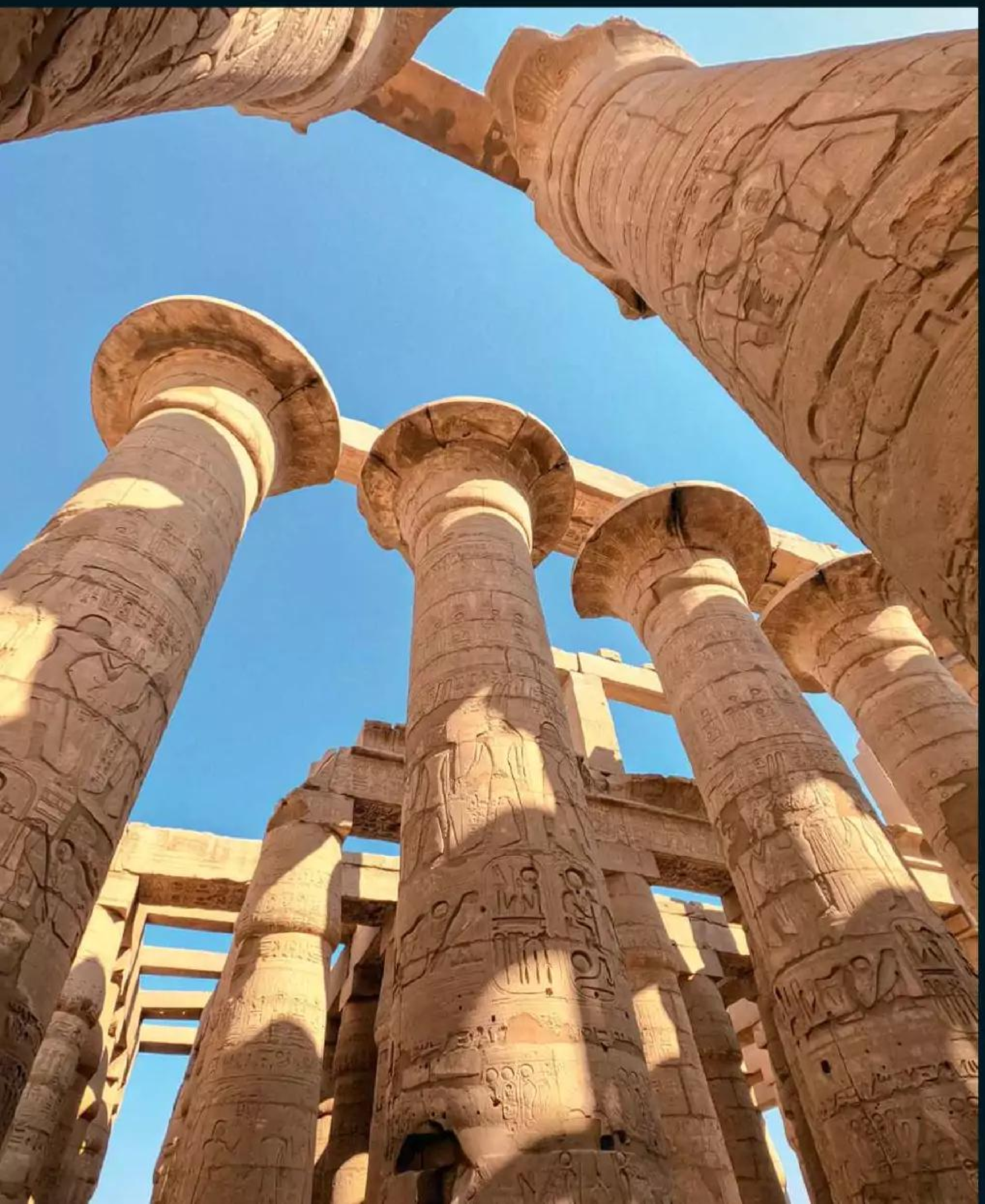
From temples to tombs, bigger was definitely better in the eyes of the pharaohs and their gods



**DID YOU KNOW?**

**ON THE MOVE**

In 1968, construction of the Aswan High Dam saw the temples at Abu Simbel dismantled and relocated to a desert plateau 64 metres (about 200ft) above and 180 metres (600ft) west of their original site to save them from being flooded.



## KARNAK

◀ This temple complex in the city of Thebes is famously home to the temple of Amun, a god who was almost universally honoured by pharaohs. Scores of Egyptian rulers expanded the temple, with Sety I and Ramesses II building and decorating the Great Hypostyle Hall – the inscribed pillars of which are shown left.

## RAMESSEUM

▶ Built by Ramesses II, this mortuary temple was meant to be a staggering site at Thebes. Featuring a 17-metre-tall statue of Ramesses, the temple's walls were carved with his military achievements. However, time hasn't been kind to the temple and much of it has crumbled, with remnants littering the ground.

## THE GIZA NECROPOLIS

◀ Constructed as tombs for the pharaohs Khufu, Khafre and Menkaure, the pyramids of Giza are one of the defining images of ancient Egypt. Khufu's pyramid (known as the Great Pyramid) is the biggest and oldest of the three, originally stretching 147 metres into the air.

The three pyramids have been extensively looted, with thieves even stripping the outer layers of limestone. This has knocked several metres off the Great Pyramid's height.

## SAQQARA

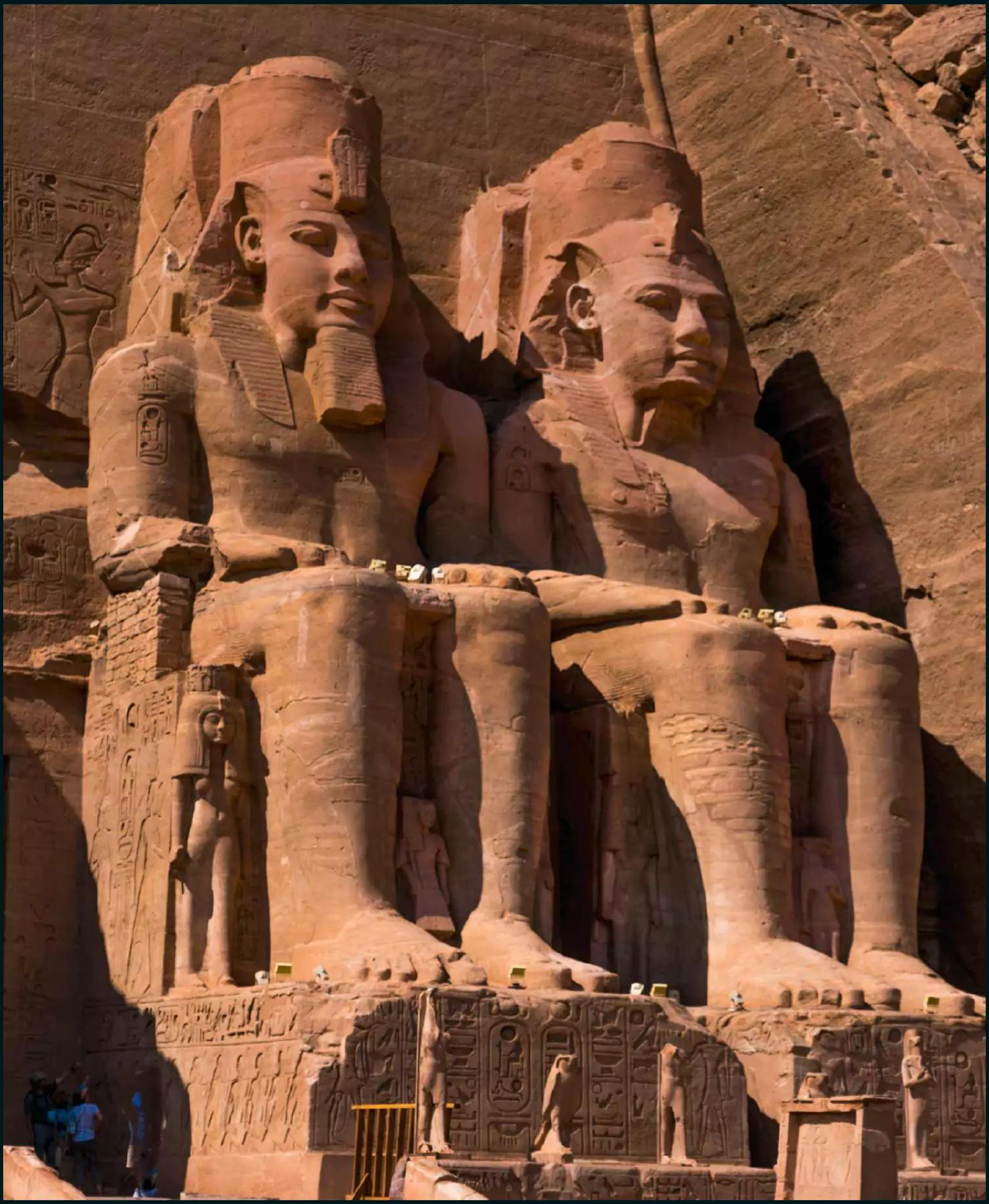
▼ This huge necropolis in Memphis is the resting place of high-ranking Egyptians stretching back to the days before the nation became one united land. However, Saqqara is most famous for the Step Pyramid (*pictured*), commissioned by Djoser and built from blocks of stone.

GETTY IMAGES X4

## TEMPLE OF HATSHEPSUT

▶ Queen Hatshepsut was determined to make her reign seem as impressive as possible, and the intricately decorated mortuary temple she commissioned at Deir el-Bahri certainly helped her achieve this.

It was styled after Mentuhotep II's mortuary temple – a smaller complex that's located right next door. Although parts of the building were defaced by her successor, Thutmose III, it certainly remained an imposing site.



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## ABU SIMBEL

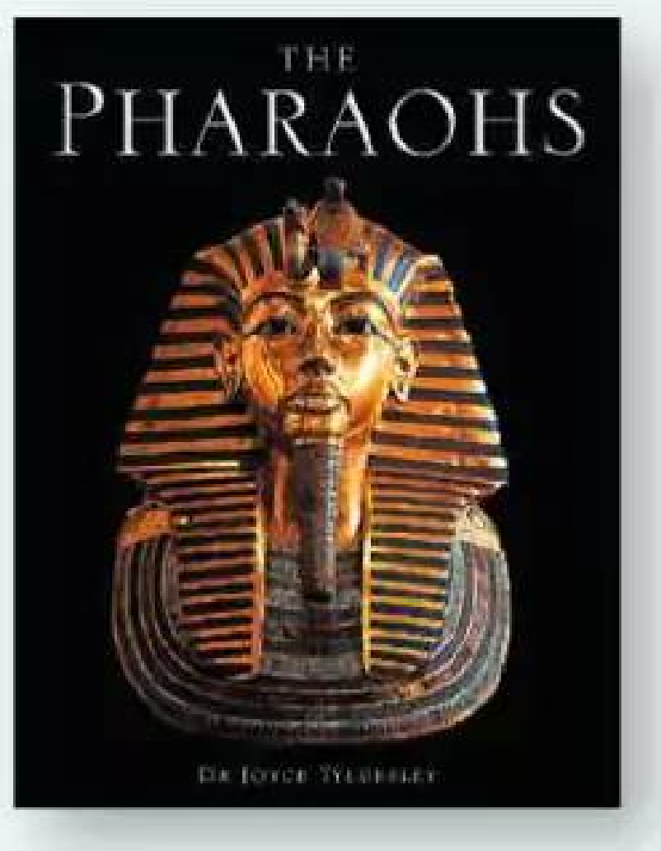
◀ This image shows two of the four 20-metre-tall statues of Ramesses II that frame the main temple of Abu Simbel, which is dedicated to the deified king and the gods Ra-Horakhty, Amun-Ra and Ptah. Hewn from a sandstone cliff, the imposing temples were lost until 1813. ⊙

**WORDS: RHIANNON DAVIES**

# GET HOOKED

If we've whetted your appetite for ancient Egyptian pharaohs, why not explore the topic further with our pick of books, films, podcasts and TV and radio programmes

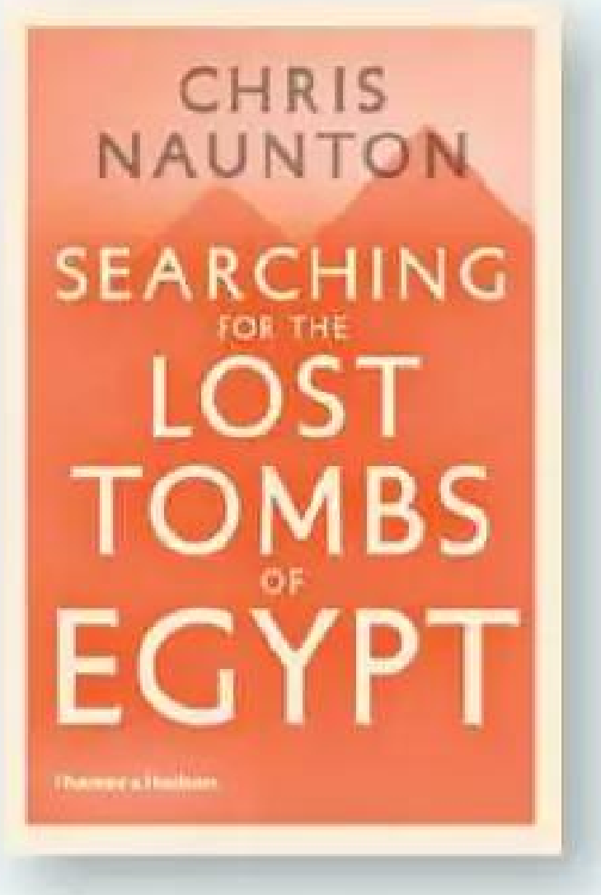
## BOOKS



**The Pharaohs**

By Prof Joyce Tyldesley
(Quercus Publishing, 2019)

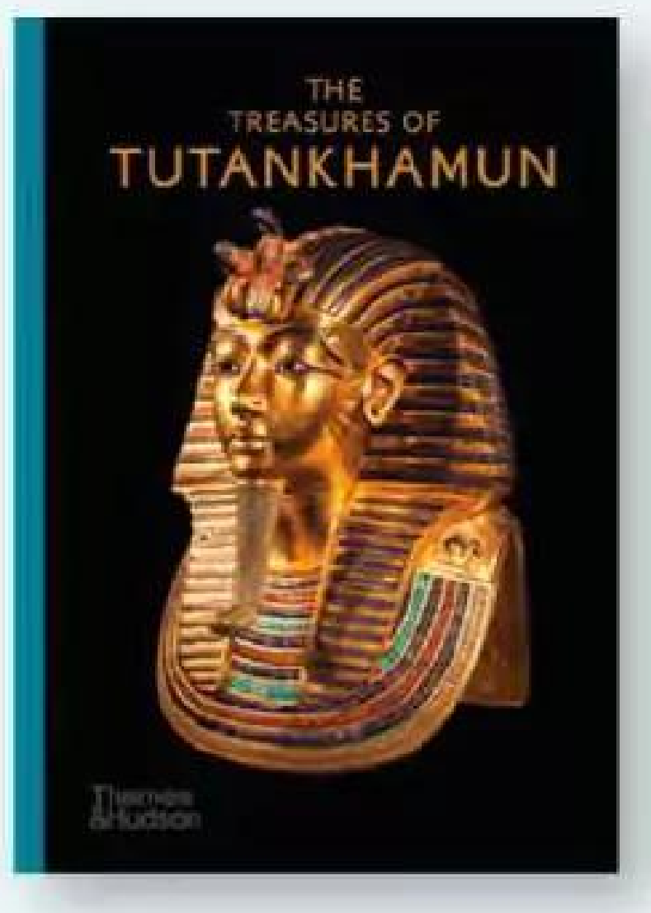
In an illustrated history of the kings who ruled over Egypt, Prof Joyce Tyldesley narrates the story of 30 dynasties, and profiles powerful, and sometimes enigmatic, rulers such as Mentuhotep II, Thutmose III, Akhenaten, Tutankhamun, Rameses II and more.



**Searching for the Lost Tombs of Egypt**

By Dr Chris Naunton
(Thames & Hudson, 2018)

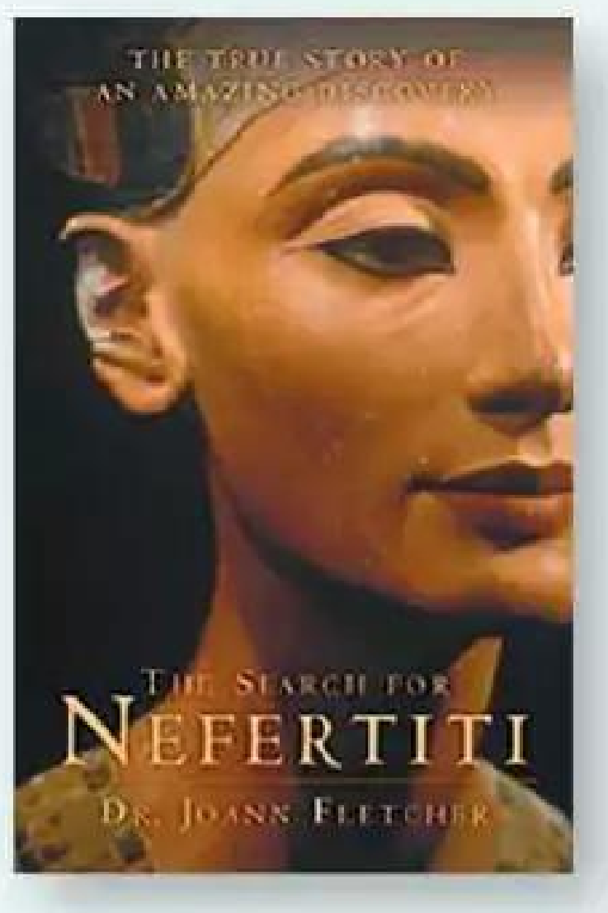
Dr Chris Naunton unravels the tangled threads surrounding the mysteries of the missing tombs of Alexander the Great and Cleopatra, exploring the reasons why tombs remain such a central part of the continuing allure of ancient Egypt.



**The Treasures of Tutankhamun**

By Dr Garry J Shaw
(Thames & Hudson, 2021)

This beautifully illustrated book brings to life some of the greatest treasures discovered in the tomb of Tutankhamun, with text explaining what each featured object is, where it was found and why it was buried with the young pharaoh.

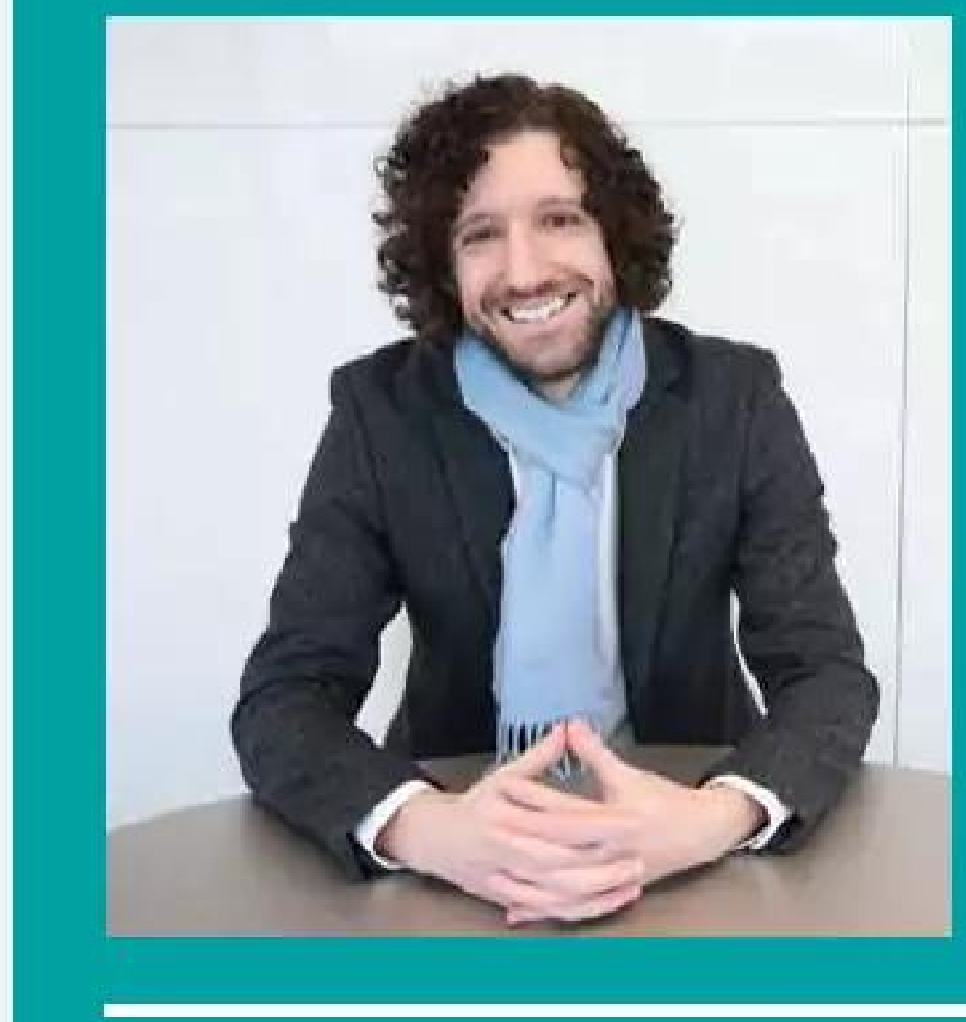


**The Search for Nefertiti: The True Story of an Amazing Discovery**

By Prof Joann Fletcher
(William Morrow & Co, 2004)

Prof Joann Fletcher explores the story behind her research into a long-forgotten mummy from the Valley of the Kings that she believes is Nefertiti, wife of Pharaoh Akhenaten.

## ON THE BBC

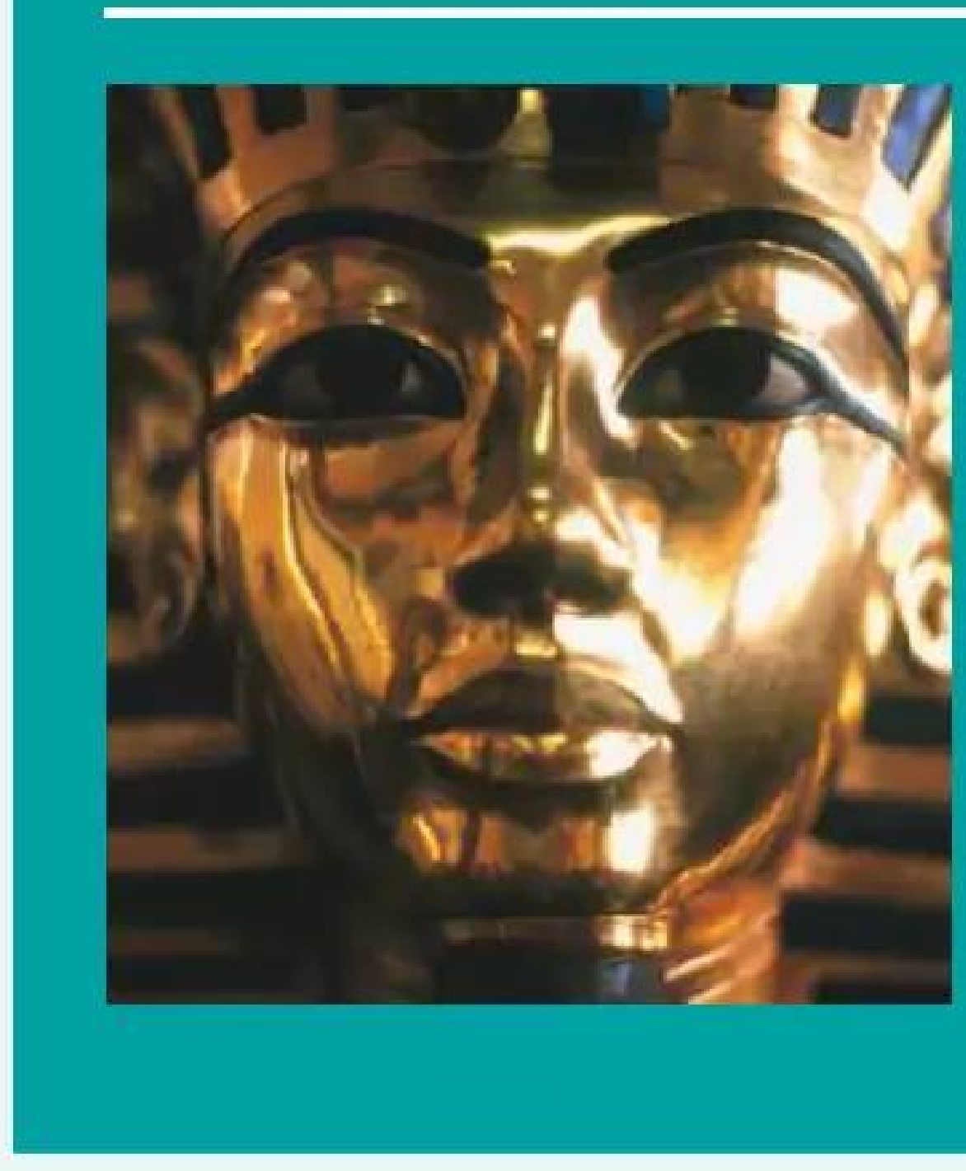


BBC RADIO 4

◀ **You're Dead to Me: The Egyptian Pyramids**
*bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p09l63kf*
Greg Jenner (*pictured*) is joined by Prof Sarah Parcak and comedian Maria Shehata to learn all about the magnificent Egyptian pyramids.

BBC WORLD SERVICE

◀ **The Forum: Nefertiti: The beguiling Egyptian Queen**
*bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3csyp61*
Bridget Kendall (*pictured*) and guests, including Prof Joyce Tyldesley, discuss the story of the mysterious queen Nefertiti.



BBC RADIO 4

◀ **The Cult of King Tut**
*bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0009r52*
Prof Patricia Clavin explores the cult of Egyptomania that sprang up following the opening, in 1922, of Tutankhamun's tomb.

## ONLINE AND AUDIO

▶ **For podcasts, features, quizzes, interviews and more on Egyptian pharaohs, visit our website: *historyextra.com/period/ancient-egypt***

▶ **Looking for Egypt's lost tombs**
In a lecture from 2019, Dr Chris Naunton explores some of the most fascinating ancient figures whose tombs are yet to be discovered. Listen at *bit.ly/3jmm86Z*

▶ **Cleopatra: unpicking myth from reality**
Prof Joyce Tyldesley explores the life and legacy of the last queen of Egypt. Listen at *bit.ly/3O3uuOM*

▶ **Egyptian pharaohs: everything you wanted to know**
Prof Joyce Tyldesley answers listener questions and top internet search queries about ancient Egypt's royal rulers. Listen at *bit.ly/360upKJ*

## WATCH

**Tutankhamun: Waking the Dead**

(now streaming on My5)

Using a century of research and the latest scientific evidence, Prof Bettany Hughes takes a forensic look at the body of Tutankhamun.

**Legends of the Pharaohs**

(Sky History)

Experts and historians explore the birth of Egypt's ancient wonders through the eyes of the architects, stone cutters, soldiers and farmers who toiled to fulfil the pharaohs' visions.

FRAN MONK X1, GETTY IMAGES X3, SANDSTONE GLOBAL X1

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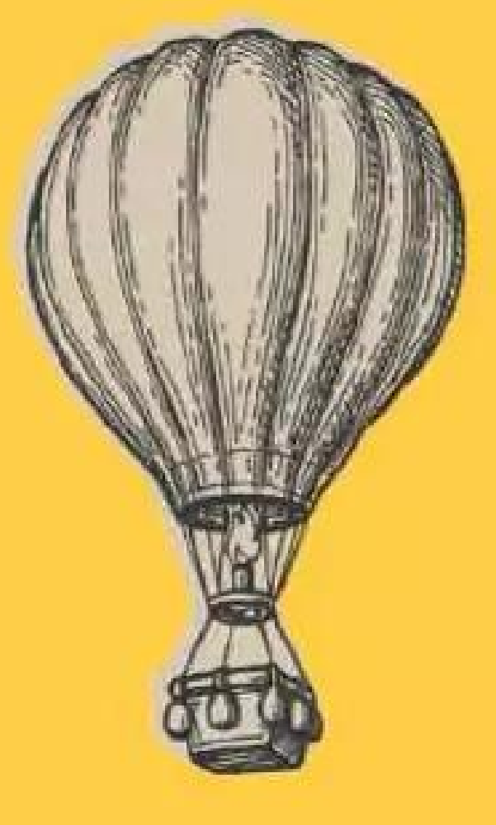

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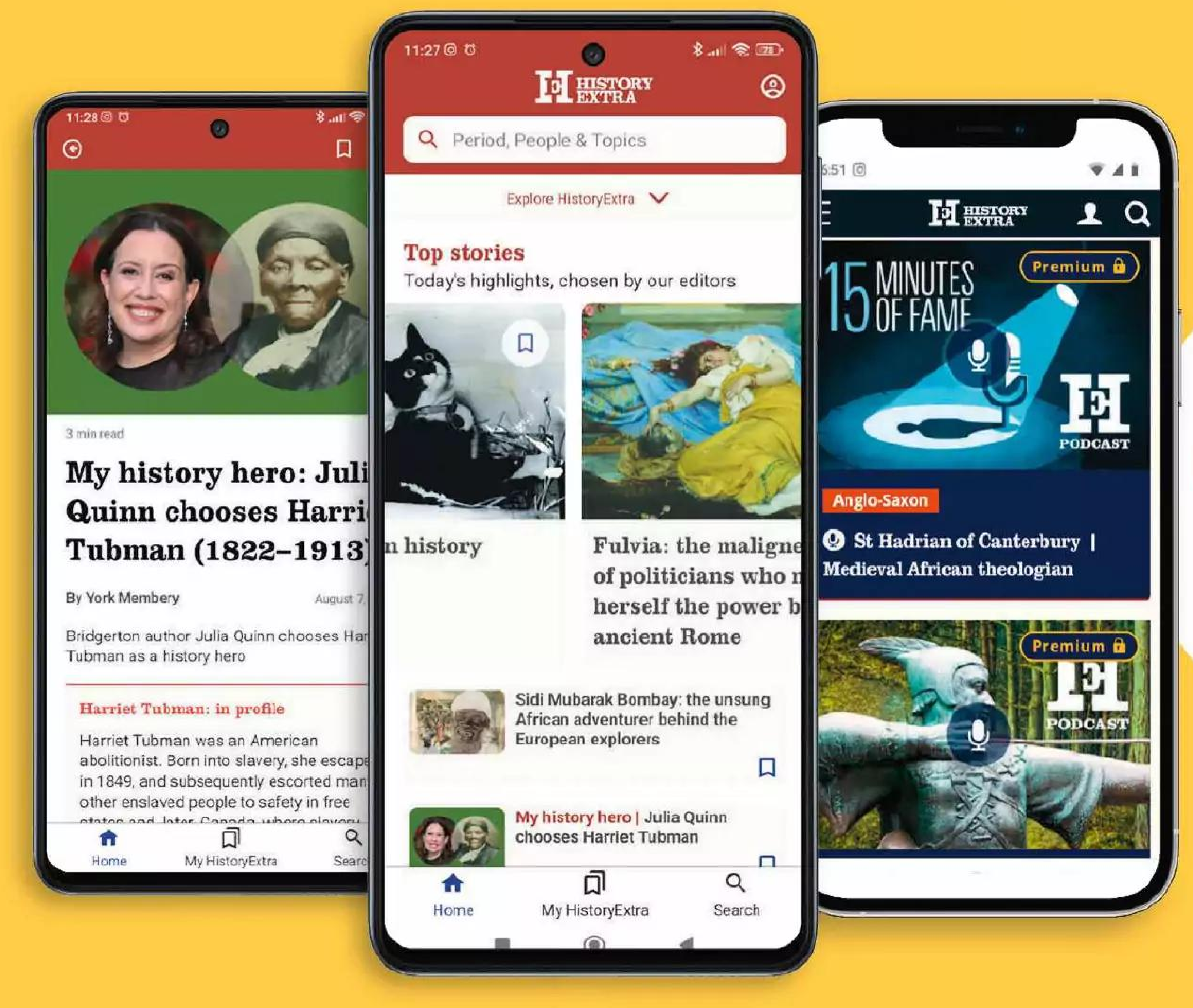

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3 min read

My history hero: Juli
Quinn chooses Harri
Tubman (1822–1913)

By York Membery August 7,

Bridgerton author Julia Quinn chooses Har
Tubman as a history hero

Harriet Tubman: in profile

Harriet Tubman was an American abolitionist. Born into slavery, she escape in 1849, and subsequently escorted man other enslaved people to safety in free

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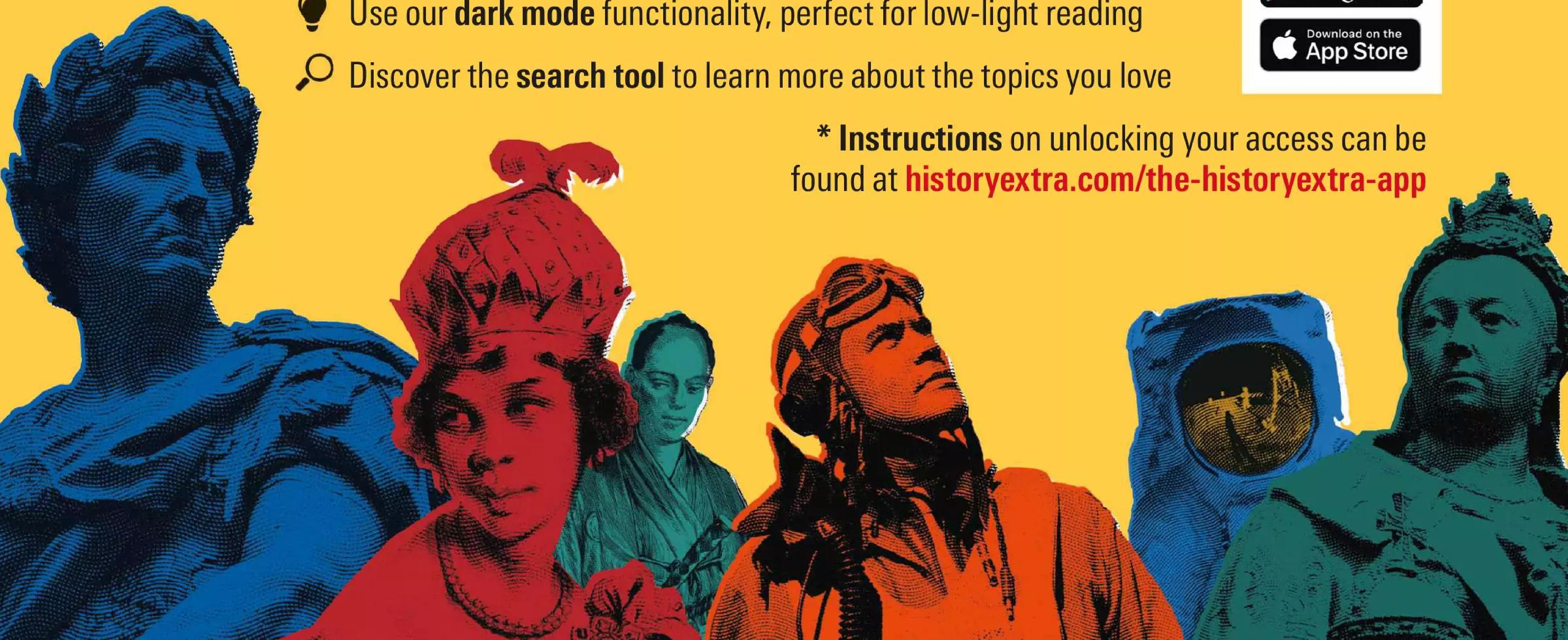
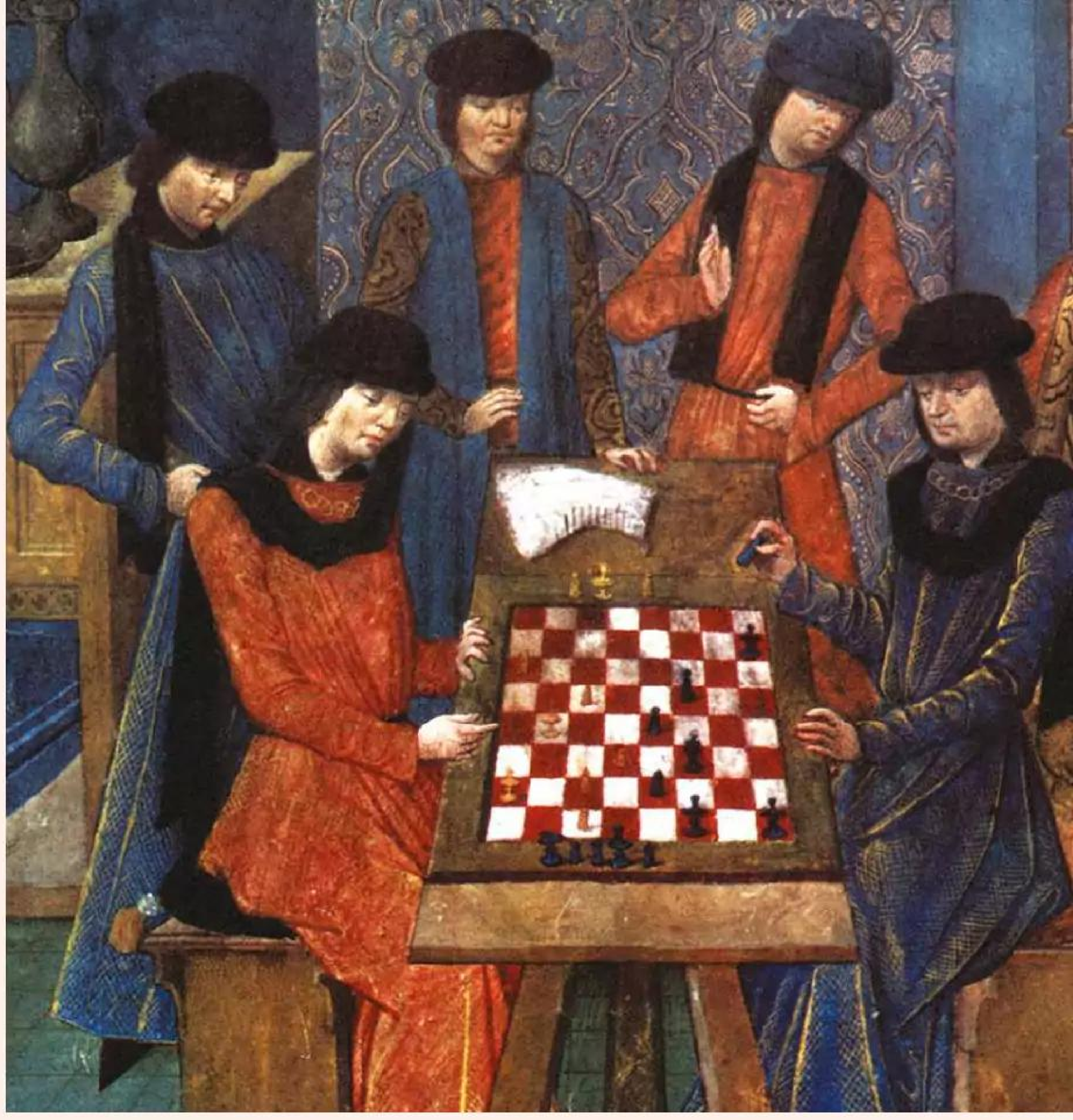
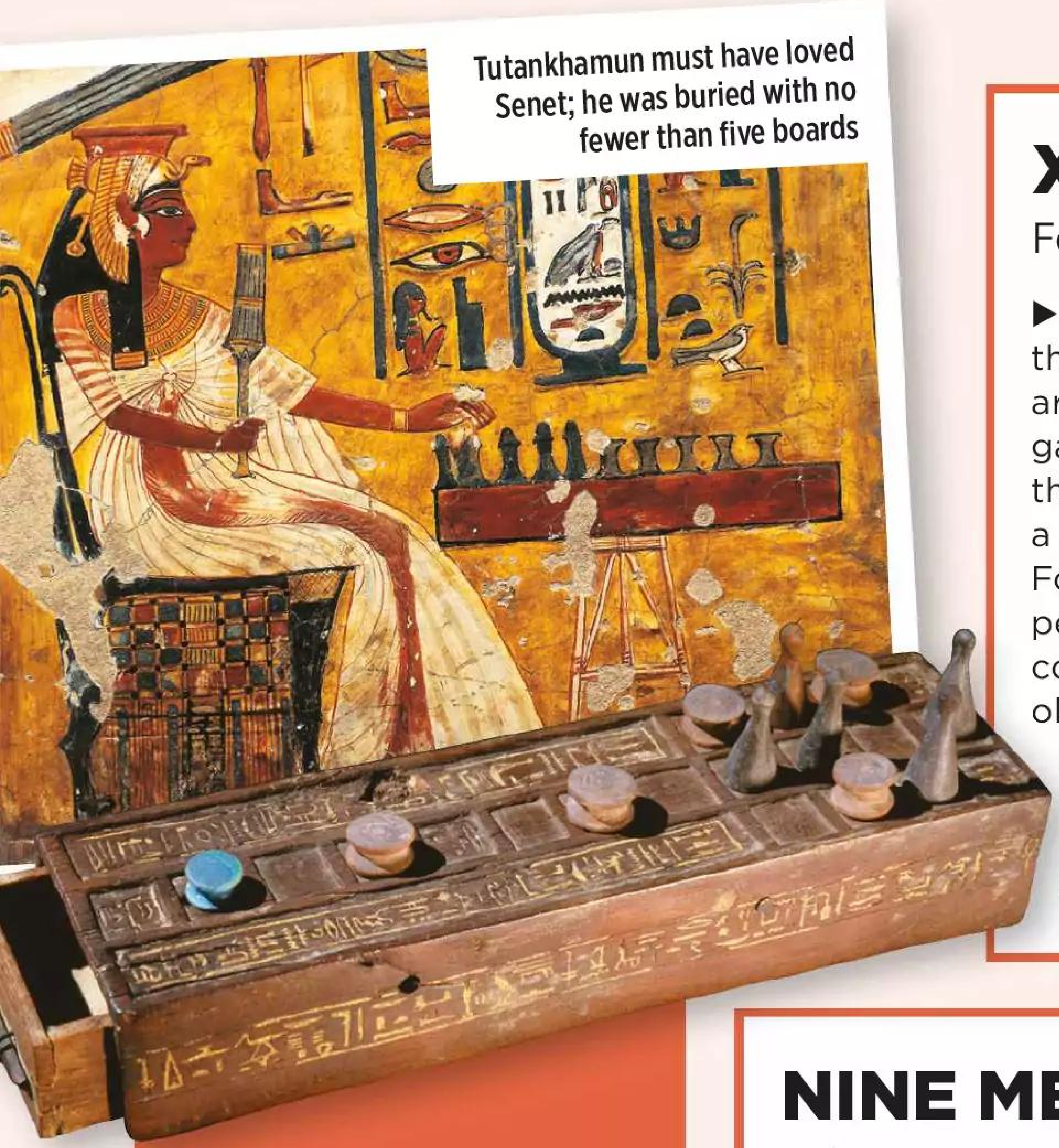


**TOP 10**

# Ancient Games

Board games were a pastime long before Monopoly starting ruining Christmas



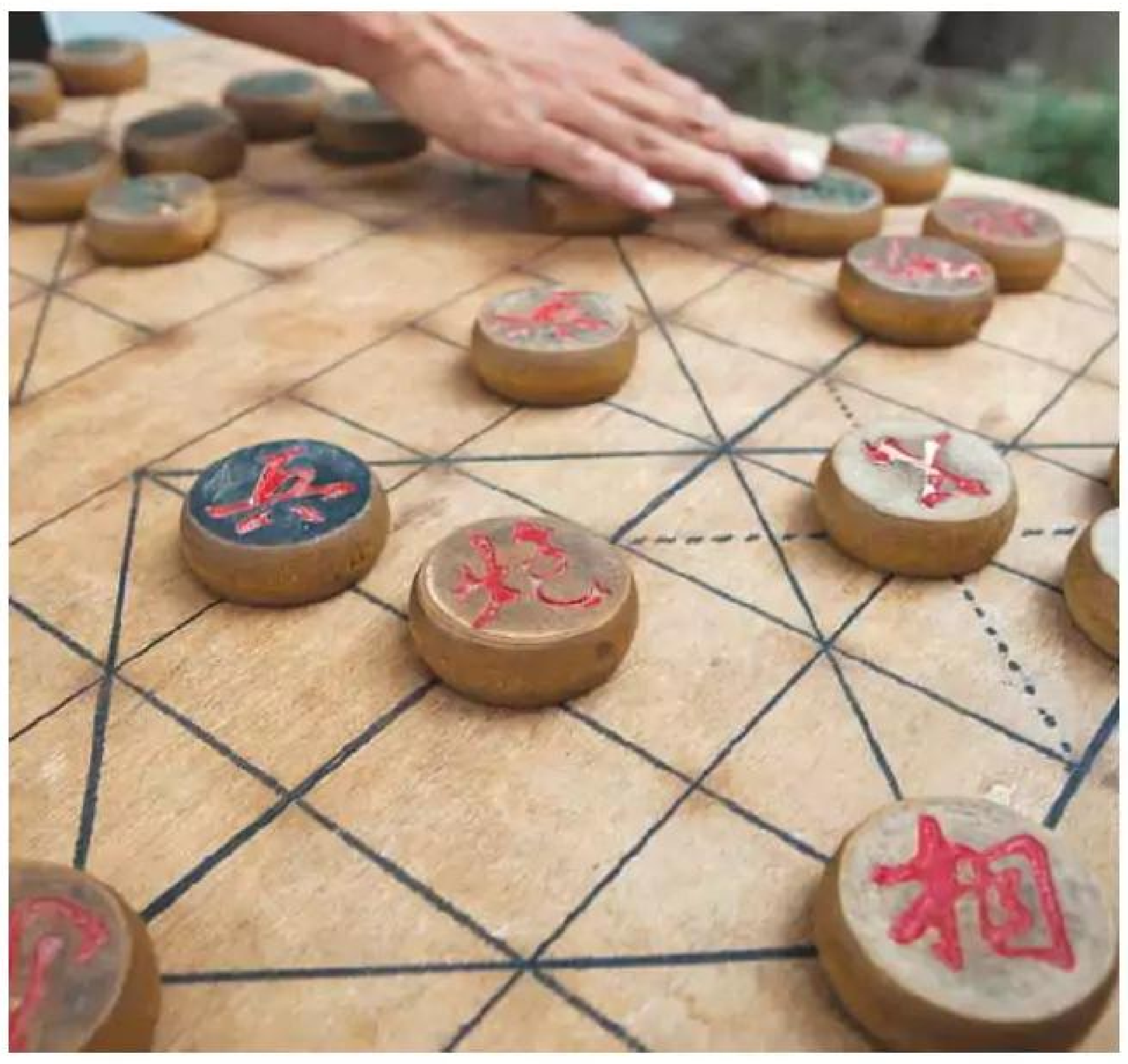


Tutankhamun must have loved Senet; he was buried with no fewer than five boards

## XIANGQI

Fourth century BC

▶ Xiangqi is an ancient Chinese game that represents a battle between two armies. Translated as the 'elephant game', it was first recorded during the 4th century BC. It was apparently a favourite of one of the famed Four Lords of the Warring States period, Lord Mengchang. Each player controls a force of 16 pieces and the objective is to capture the opponent's king – which is perhaps part of the reason it is also known as Chinese chess. The game is still played in China today.



Xiangqi is 'chess' in name only – its board features a river and palaces, for one thing

## SENET

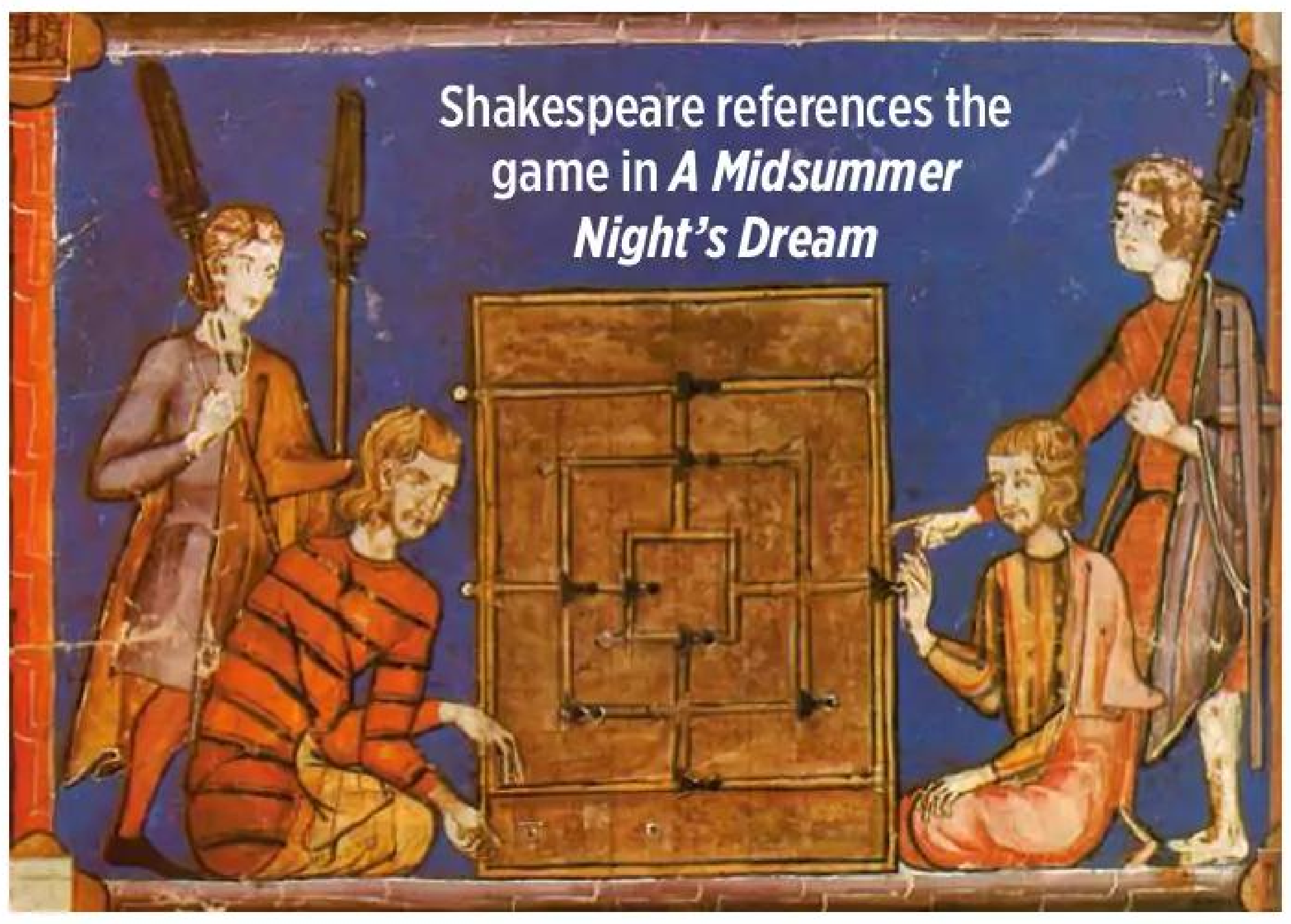
c3100 BC

▲ The contender for the oldest board game discovered so far has to be Senet, played on a 30-square grid with two sets of pawns and throwing sticks, as the earliest hieroglyphics showing it being played date back to the 31st century BC. The full name means 'the game of passing', and many of the squares feature hazards one might face on the journey to the afterlife. It's even referenced in the Book of the Dead – a set an funerary texts. The rules are unknown but it's thought that the first player to get all of their pawns off the board wins.

## NINE MEN'S MORRIS

c1400 BC

▼ This mysterious game has unknown origins, but a board has been found cut into roofing slabs in Egypt dating to 1400 BC. Believed to have been played across the Roman Empire, it has also been found carved into cloister seats at Canterbury Cathedral and Westminster Abbey. Each player creates a line of three 'men', which enables them to be able to take an opponent's piece. The winner is the first to reduce their opponent to two pieces.



Shakespeare references the game in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

## LIUBO

c1000 BC

**▼ Liubo, an ancient Chinese board game mentioned in the works of the philosopher Confucius, was invented no later than the middle of the first millennium BC – legend states that it was devised long before this, but no archeological evidence to support this has been found. Each player had six pieces, which move around a board in a symmetrical pattern. Sticks were used to determine the move instead of dice. How exactly you won is in doubt.**

Liubo was said to be popular among immortals as well as lowly humans

ALAMY X2, AKG IMAGES X1, GETTY X9

The longest possible game of chess is commonly held to be 5,949 moves

## CHESS

c760 AD

◀ One of the most widely played games across the world, chess originated in India. The aim is trap your opponent's king – or 'checkmate' him, a term that comes from Arabic 'shāh māt', which means 'the king is dead'. The oldest pieces found date back to 760 AD, while the oldest surviving book on chess theory was published in 1497. An earlier form of the game is believed to have been played in Eastern India in the 6th century, known as Chaturanga.

## GO

Fourth century BC

▼ Being accomplished in Go was extremely important in ancient China: it was one of the four essential arts required of aristocratic scholars, along with calligraphy, painting and being able to play a stringed-instrument called a guqin. It is the oldest board game still continuously played in China. The aim is to surround more territory than your opponent with your stones – which were often made of crystal or quartz.

Go spread quickly to Korea and Japan, but took decades to gain ground beyond East Asia

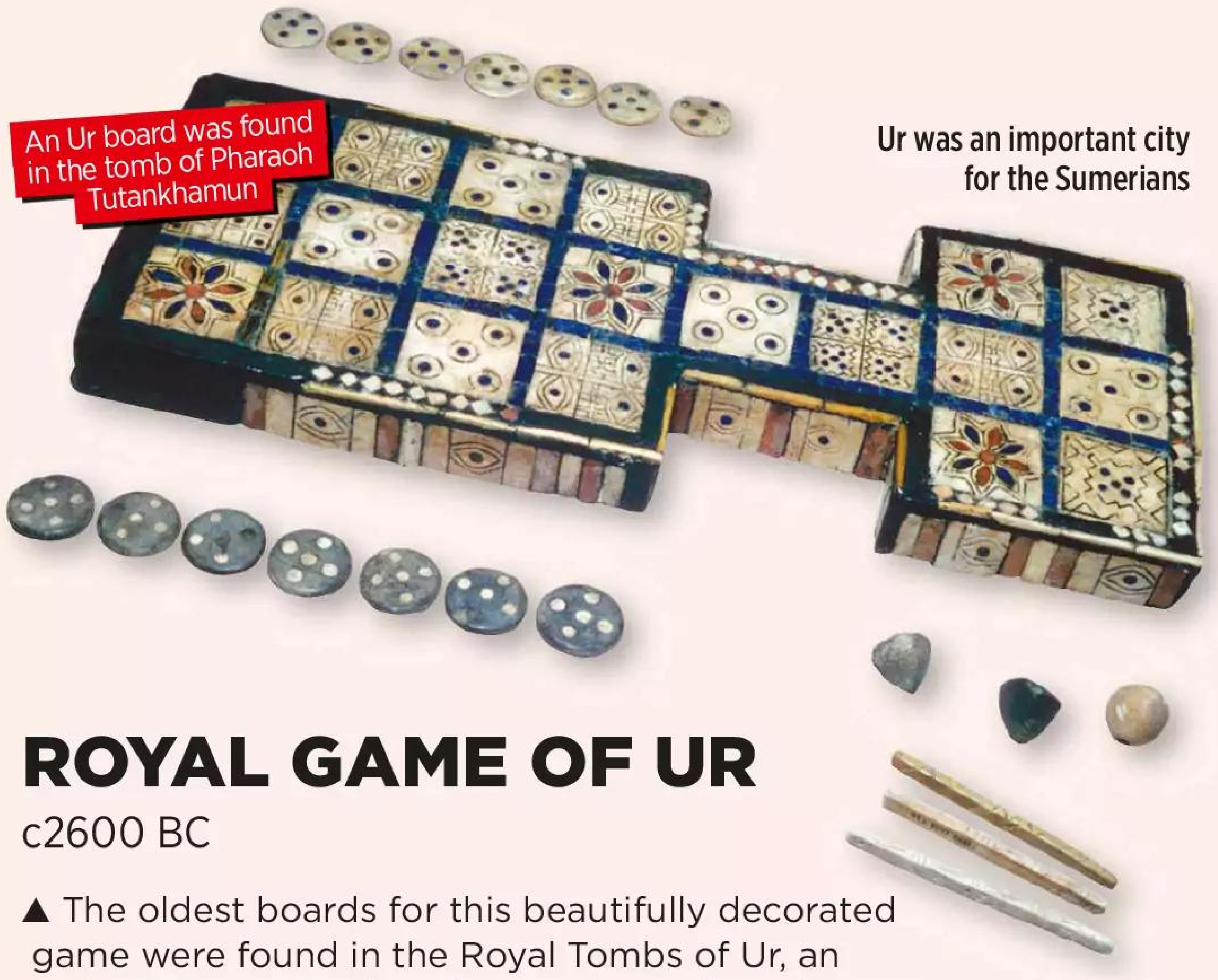
Go has even been played in space. In 1996, astronauts Daniel Barry and Koichi Wakata did so using a special set aboard Space Shuttle Endeavour

## BACKGAMMON

c3000 BC

▼ Still popular today, backgammon is a game of both strategy and luck. A board found in Iran, made of ebony with turquoise and agate pieces, is believed to be more than 5,000 years old. The aim is to be the first player to bear off – meaning to move all of their 15 checkers off the board. So popular was the game in medieval France that Louis IX issued a decree prohibiting his court officials and subjects from playing it in 1254. England followed suit in 1526, when Cardinal Wolsey ordered all backgammon boards to be burnt.

The banning of backgammon led to a trend of disguising boards as books



An Ur board was found in the tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamun

Ur was an important city for the Sumerians

## ROYAL GAME OF UR

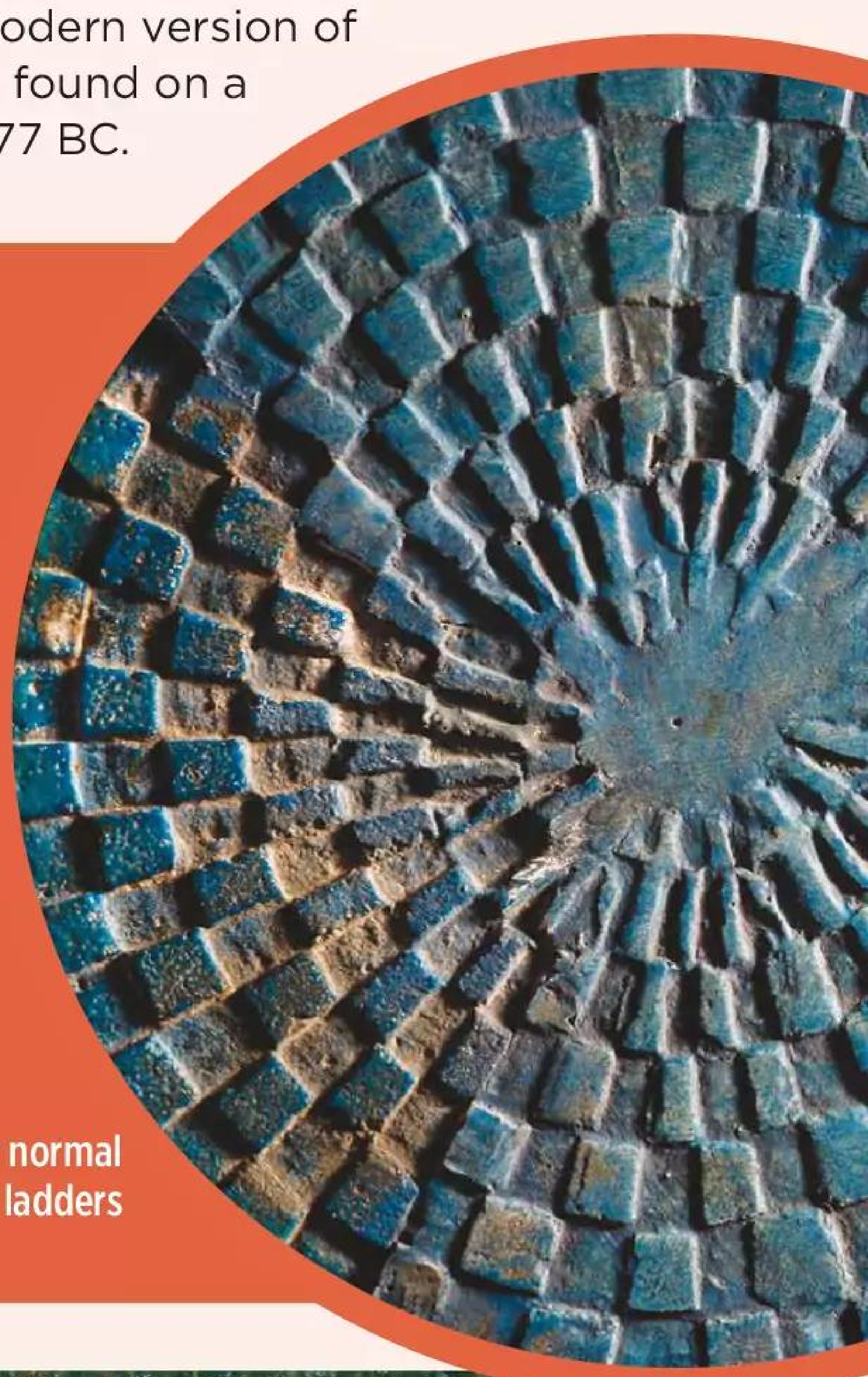
c2600 BC

▲ The oldest boards for this beautifully decorated game were found in the Royal Tombs of Ur, an ancient Mesopotamian city now in modern-day Iraq. It's believed to have been a two-player race game, but the original rules are unknown. A modern version of the game can be played using rules found on a Babylonian cuneiform tablet from 177 BC.

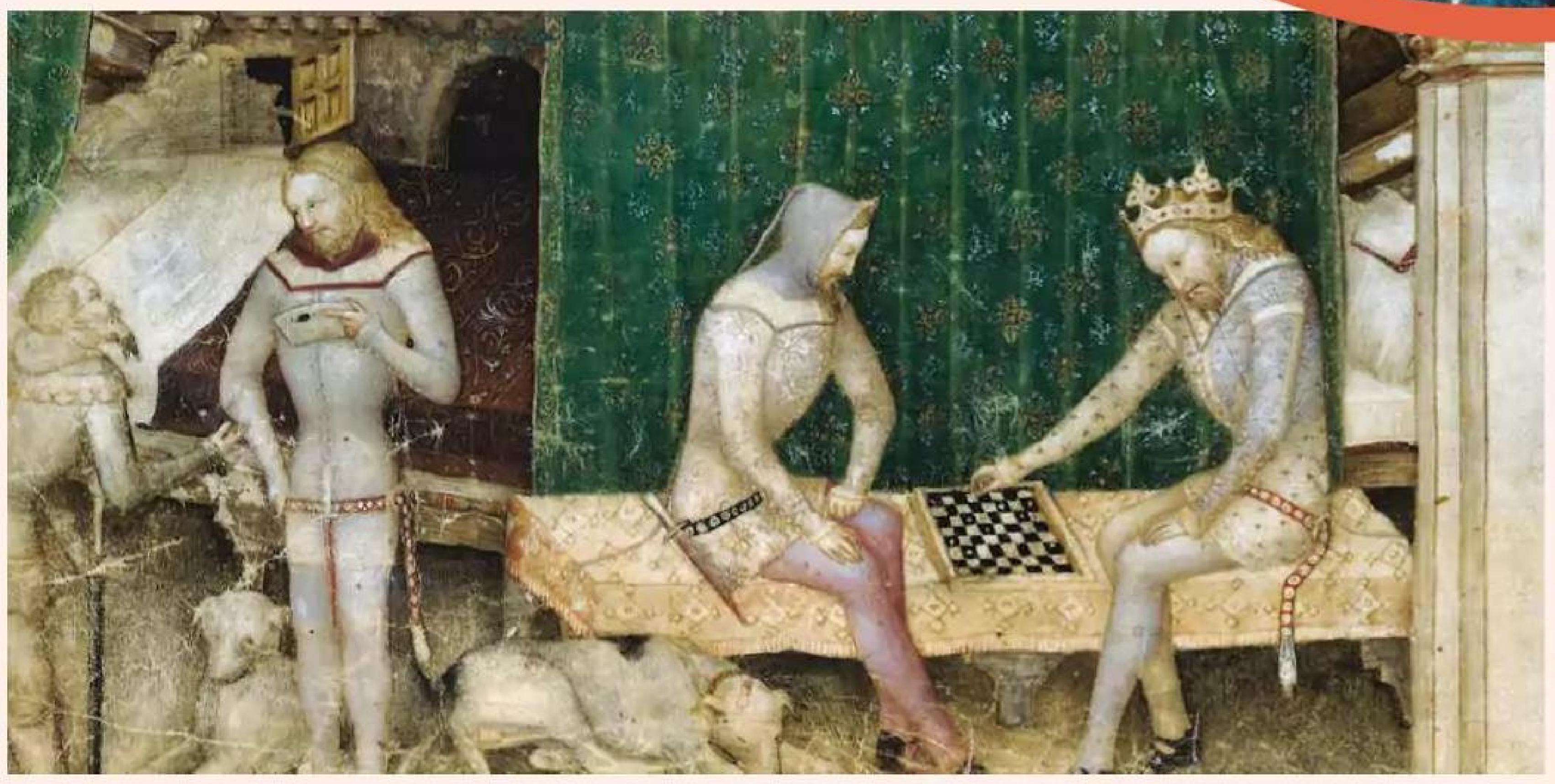
## MEHEN

c3000 BC

▶ This Ancient Egyptian game was played on a board shaped like a coiled snake, and shares its name with the snake god who protected the sun god Ra on his journey through the night. Lion-shaped pieces and marbles appear to have been used to play, but how they were used remains a mystery.



Mehen isn't your normal game of snakes and ladders



Even 14th-century kings played draughts

## DRAUGHTS

c3000 BC

▲ Draughts, also known as checkers, is a strategy game that's still popular today. The aim is to capture the opponent's pieces by jumping over them diagonally. A board has been found in Ur, modern-day Iraq, dating from c3000 BC. It's believed that a similar game was played during the Trojan War and across the Roman Empire. ⊙

**WORDS: EMMA SLATTERY WILLIAMS**

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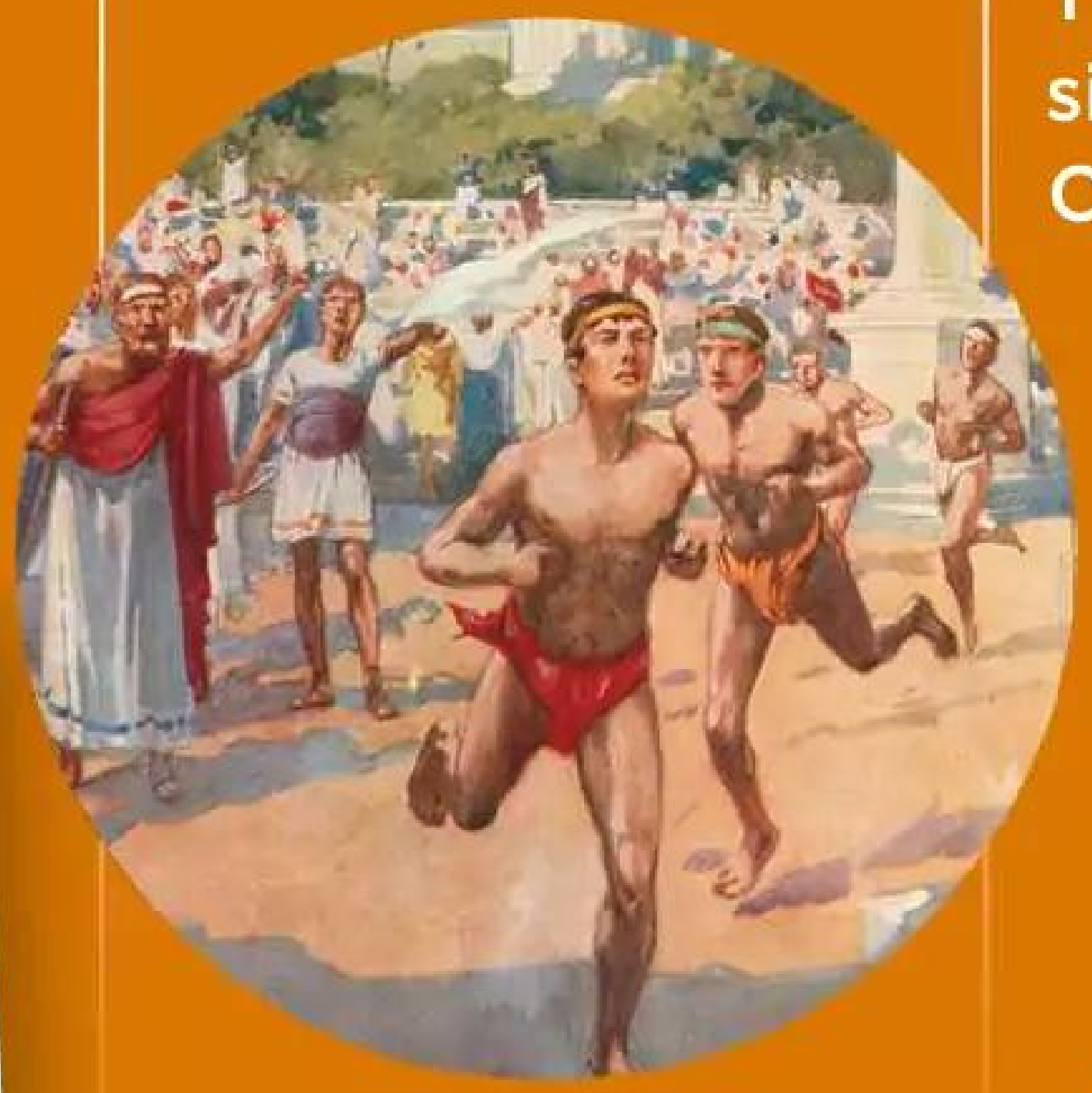
**PAUL CARTLEDGE** is Emeritus AG Leventis Professor of Greek Culture and AG Leventis Senior Research Fellow at the University of Cambridge. His books include *Thebes: The Forgotten City of Ancient Greece*, which is now available in paperback (Picador, 2021)

# KEY MILESTONES IN ANCIENT GREEK HISTORY

### c800 BC

▼ Greece starts to emerge from its so-called 'Dark Ages' following the collapse of the Mycenaean civilisation. City-states known as *poleis* begin to form on the Greek mainland, eventually expanding around the Aegean.

### 776 BC



▲ The first Olympic Games are held in honour of Zeus at Olympia.

### c750 BC

The Greeks set their sights further afield. One of their earliest western colonies is Pithekoussai in the Bay of Naples, with further settlements arising in the Mediterranean and North Africa. Around this time, the poet Homer writes *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.

### 743–724 BC

The First Messenian War is fought between the Greek city-states of Sparta and Messene. The latter is defeated and becomes annexed by Sparta, with most of its citizens reduced to slaves.

### 660–650 BC

The Second Messenian War begins as a slave revolt by the Messenians against their Spartan overlords. However, the uprising fails, and the Spartans remain in control. Meanwhile, the city-states of Athens, Sparta and Corinth continue to grow in power.

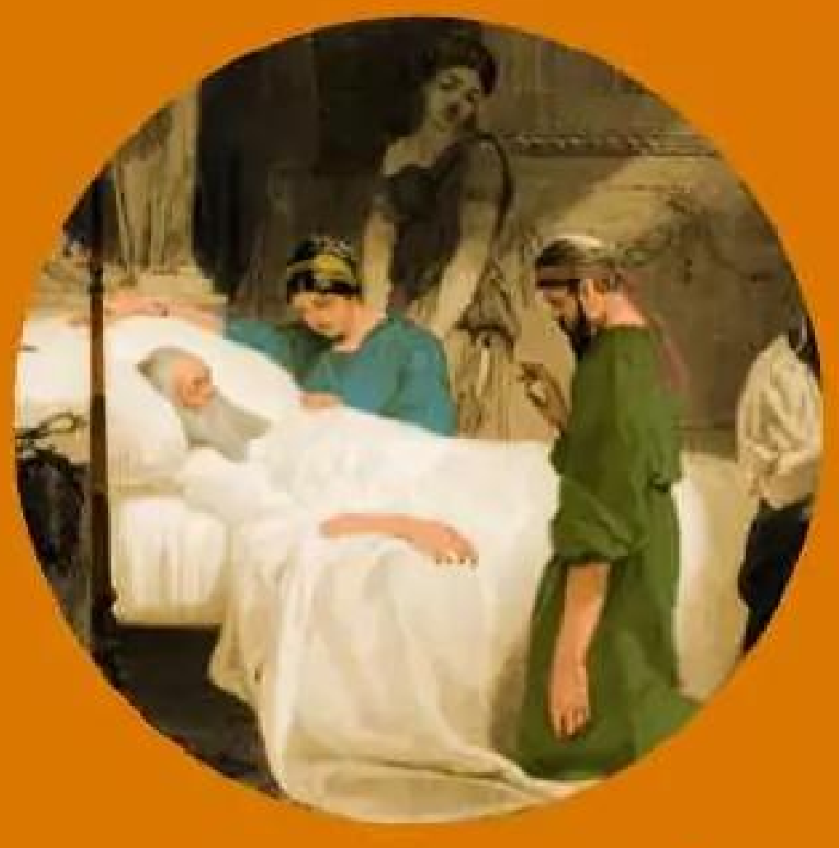
### 447 BC

▲ Construction begins on the Parthenon, a temple to the goddess Athena, on the Athenian acropolis.

### 431–404 BC

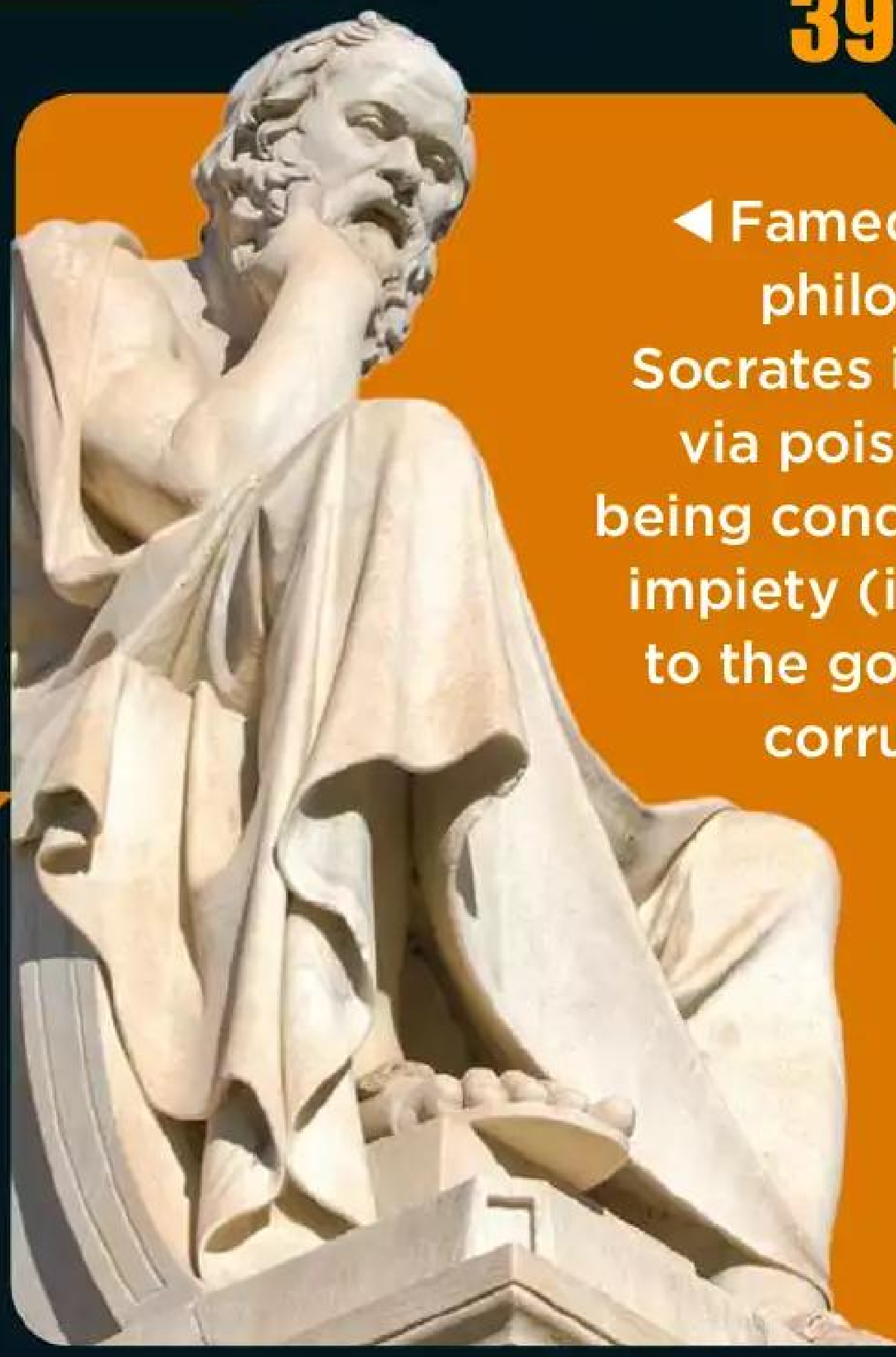
▼ The Second Peloponnesian War sees the Spartans emerge as the victors.

### 430 BC



▲ A quarter of the population of Athens is killed due to an outbreak of plague, including its leader, Pericles (*pictured*).

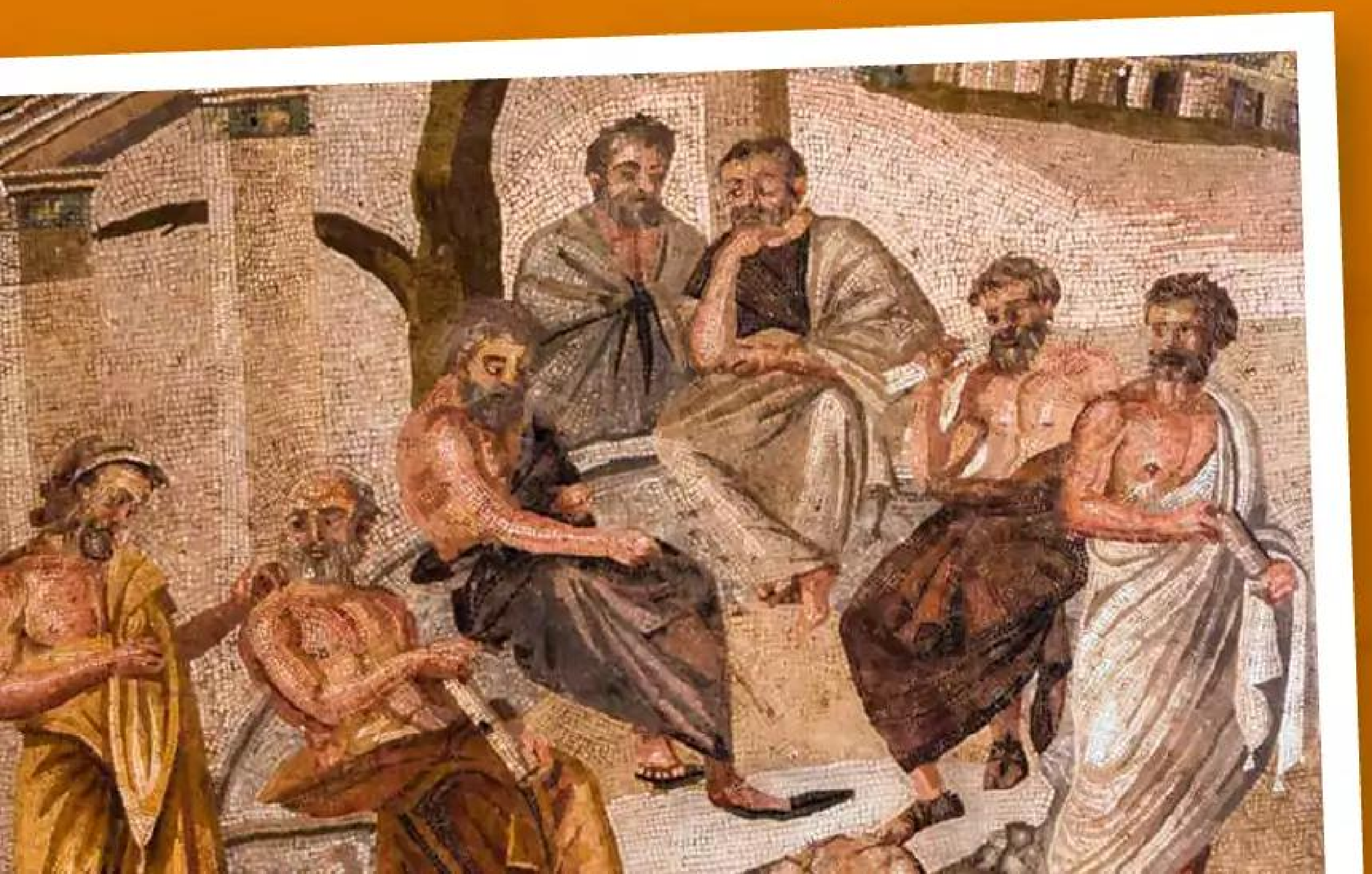
### 399 BC



◀ Famed Athenian philosopher Socrates is executed via poison after being condemned for impiety (irreverence to the gods) and for corrupting the youth of the city.

### 387 BC

▼ Philosopher Plato establishes his academy in Athens, considered the earliest university in the world, where philosophy, mathematics, science and statesmanship are studied.



### 371 BC

▲ Thebes ends Spartan dominance and becomes the leading military power in Greece after securing victory at the battle of Leuctra.

### 338 BC

Philip II of Macedonia defeats Athens and Thebes. He establishes the League of Corinth, or the Hellenic League, an offensive and defensive alliance, which unites all of the Greek city-states (except Sparta) under his rule.

### 336 BC

Alexander the Great becomes king of Macedonia (today this area includes North Macedonia as well as parts of Greece, Bulgaria, Albania, Serbia and Kosovo), and later conquers Egypt, making its new capital Alexandria. He goes on to defeat the Persian empire in 330 BC.

### 323 BC

▶ Alexander the Great dies, and ancient Greece enters an era now commonly known as the Hellenistic period.

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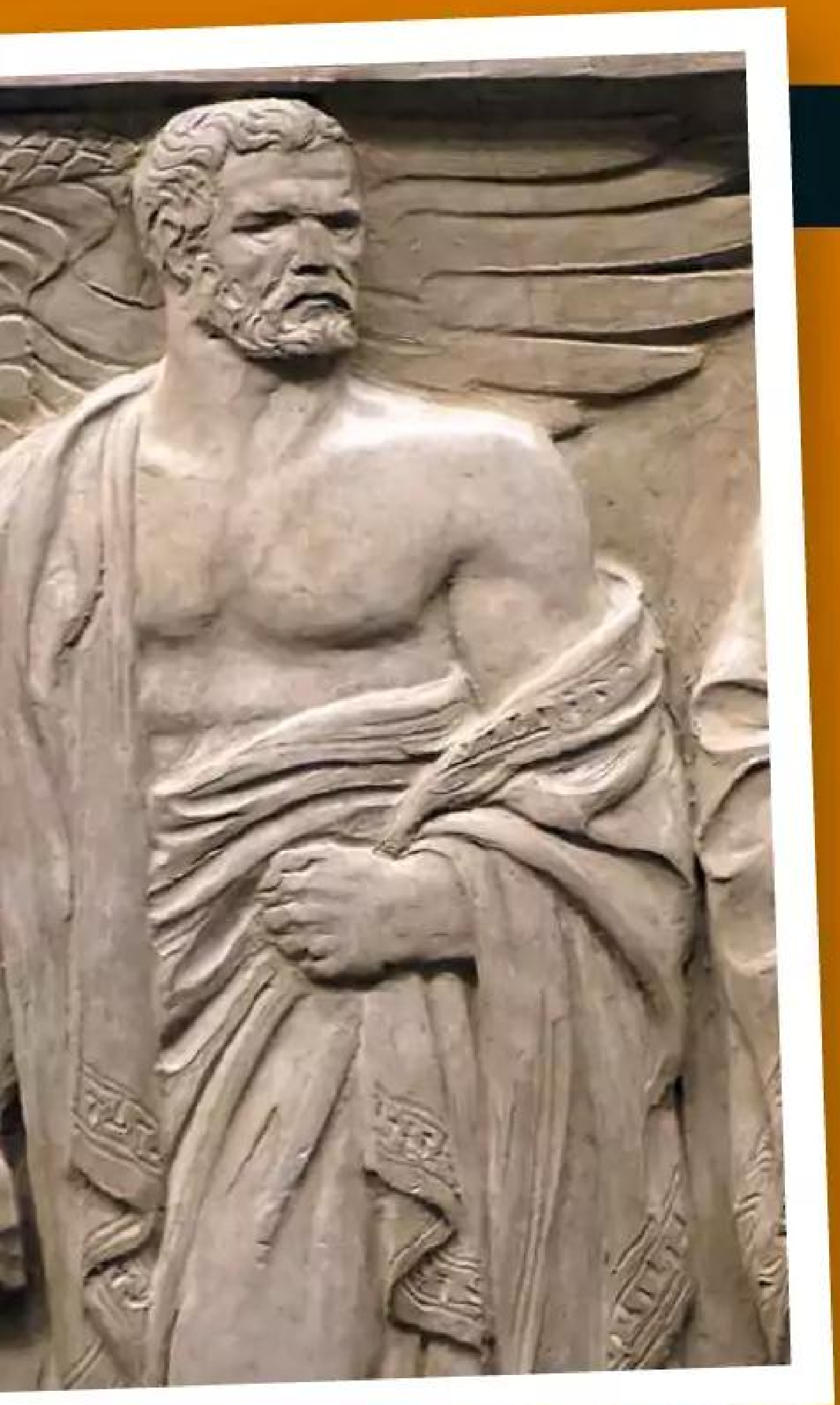
Ancient Greek civilisation spanned more than eight centuries, encompassing countless conquests, discoveries and battles – here are some of the most significant events



### c621 BC

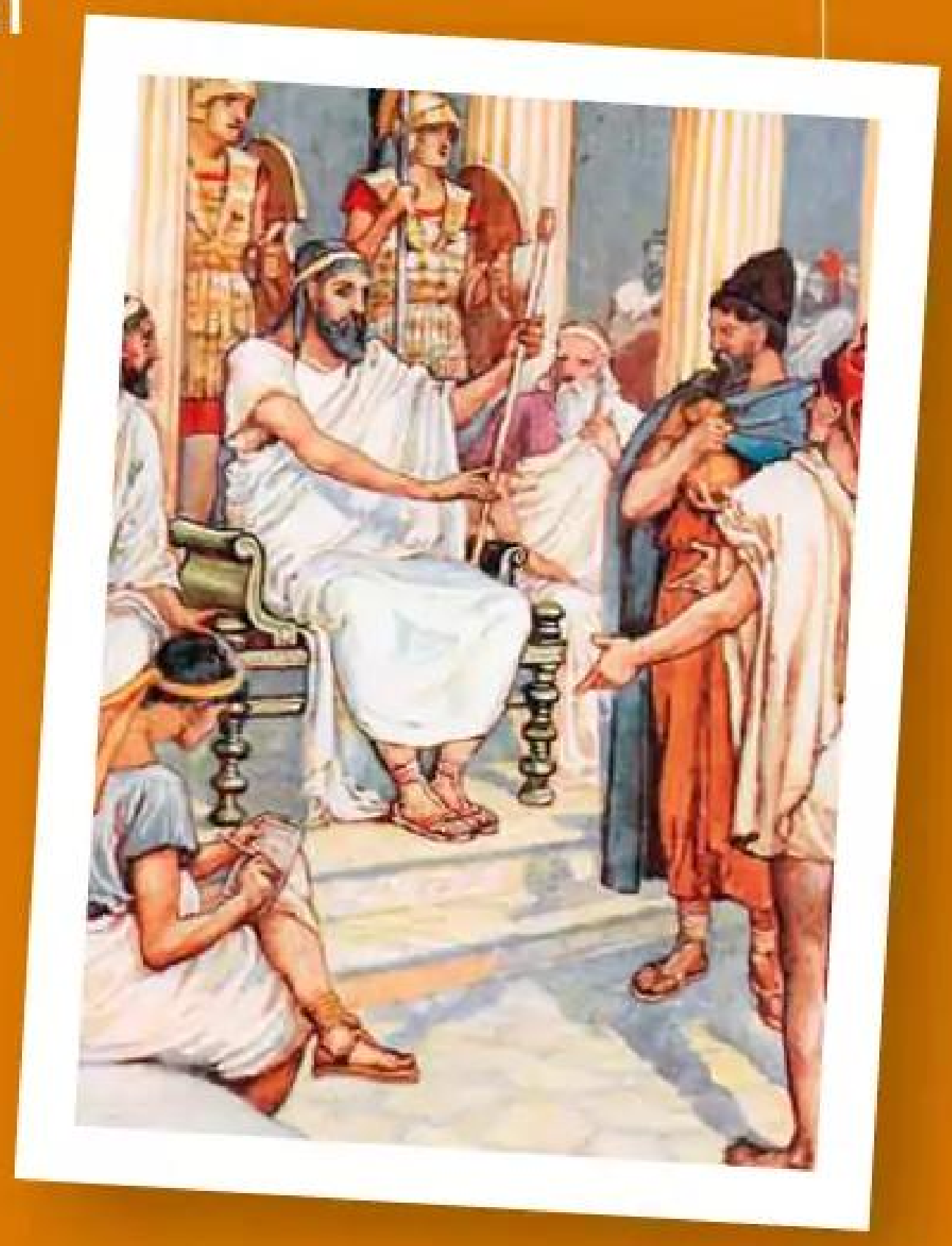
◀ A new body of laws is introduced in Athens, allegedly by an aristocrat and legislator called Draco (*pictured*). So brutal are the punishments prescribed that the so-called Draconian Laws are said to have been written in blood, and people are executed.

### c600 BC

▼ Coins are introduced and first used as currency in Athens.

### 594 BC

▼ Statesman and lawmaker Solon (*pictured*) institutes new constitutional and judicial reforms in Athens. Men over 18, regardless of social class, can now attend the *ekklesia* – the Athenian assembly. Property rights of the poor are protected, debt slavery (where people are enslaved to their creditors until they can pay them) is forbidden, and the Draconian Laws are revised.



### 570 BC

Mathematician and philosopher Pythagoras is born on the island of Samos – his work on the importance of numbers in understanding the natural world helps to develop the field of mathematics.

### c507 BC

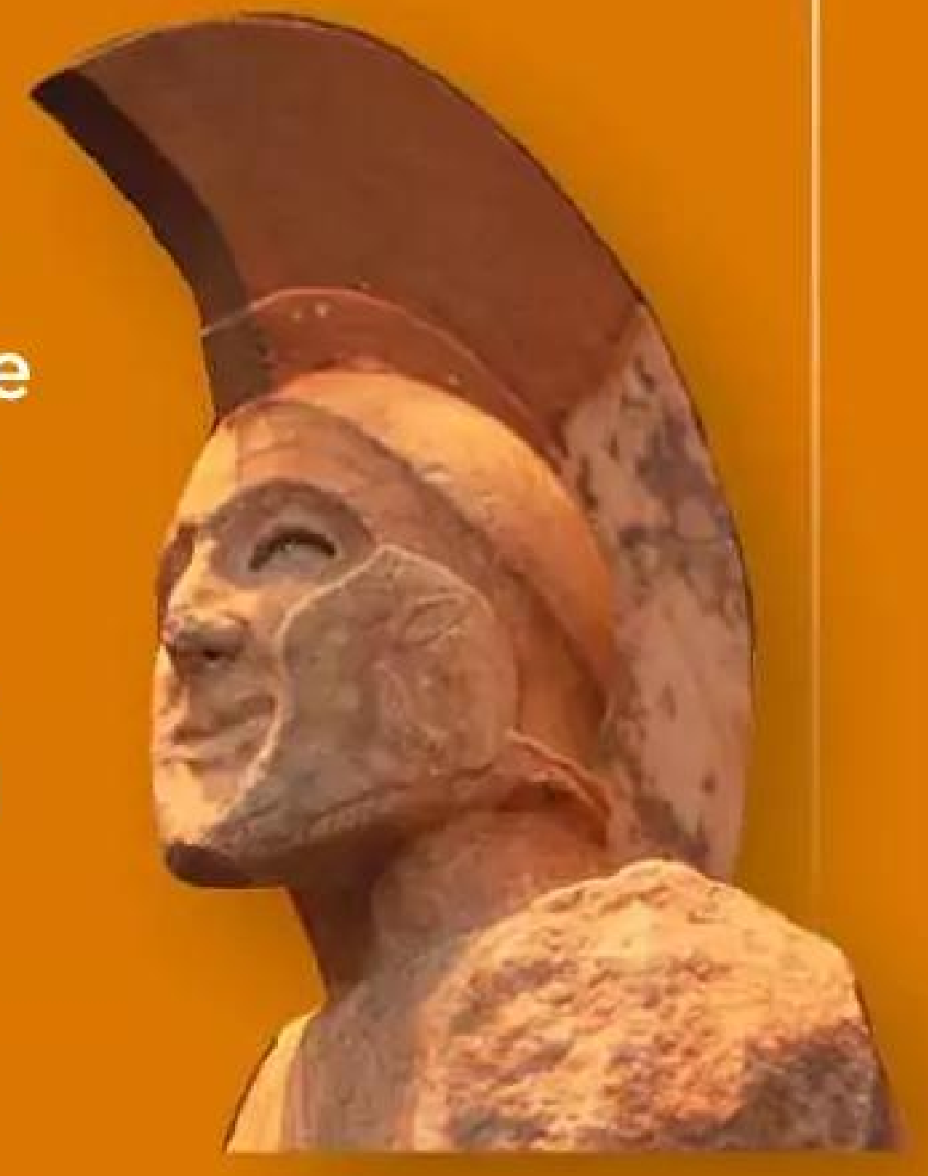
Athenian democracy is established by the statesman Cleisthenes, who furthers Solon's efforts. He creates a series of reforms called *demokratia* (power of the people), which removes the monopoly over politics held by a small number of prominent families.

### 490 BC

The Persians are defeated at the battle of Marathon. According to popular legend, prior to the battle, an Athenian messenger named Pheidippides runs around 150 miles over two days to request help from the Spartans.

### 480 BC

▼ Another Persian invasion sees a heroic, albeit failed, defence by an alliance of Greek city-states, led by King Leonidas I of Sparta (*right*) at the battle of Thermopylae. Athens is burned but the Persian forces are defeated at Salamis a few weeks later, and again at Plataea in 479 BC. The failed Persian invasion ushers in the Classical period.



### 478 BC

▼ The Delian League, a group of city-states under the leadership of Athens, is founded in the face of Persian aggression.

### 460–445 BC

The First Peloponnesian War rages between the two leading Greek city-states of Athens and Sparta. The Thirty Years' Peace is declared, but this will only last for 14 years.

### 214–205 BC

The First Macedonian War is fought between Philip V of Macedonia and Rome, which is supported by its allies in the Aetolian League (a group of Greek states united in opposition to Macedonia). The conflict ends in stalemate.

### 200–196 BC

Philip V's defeat during the Second Macedonian War causes him to lose much of southern Greece. The newly freed Greek states now find themselves under Roman protection.

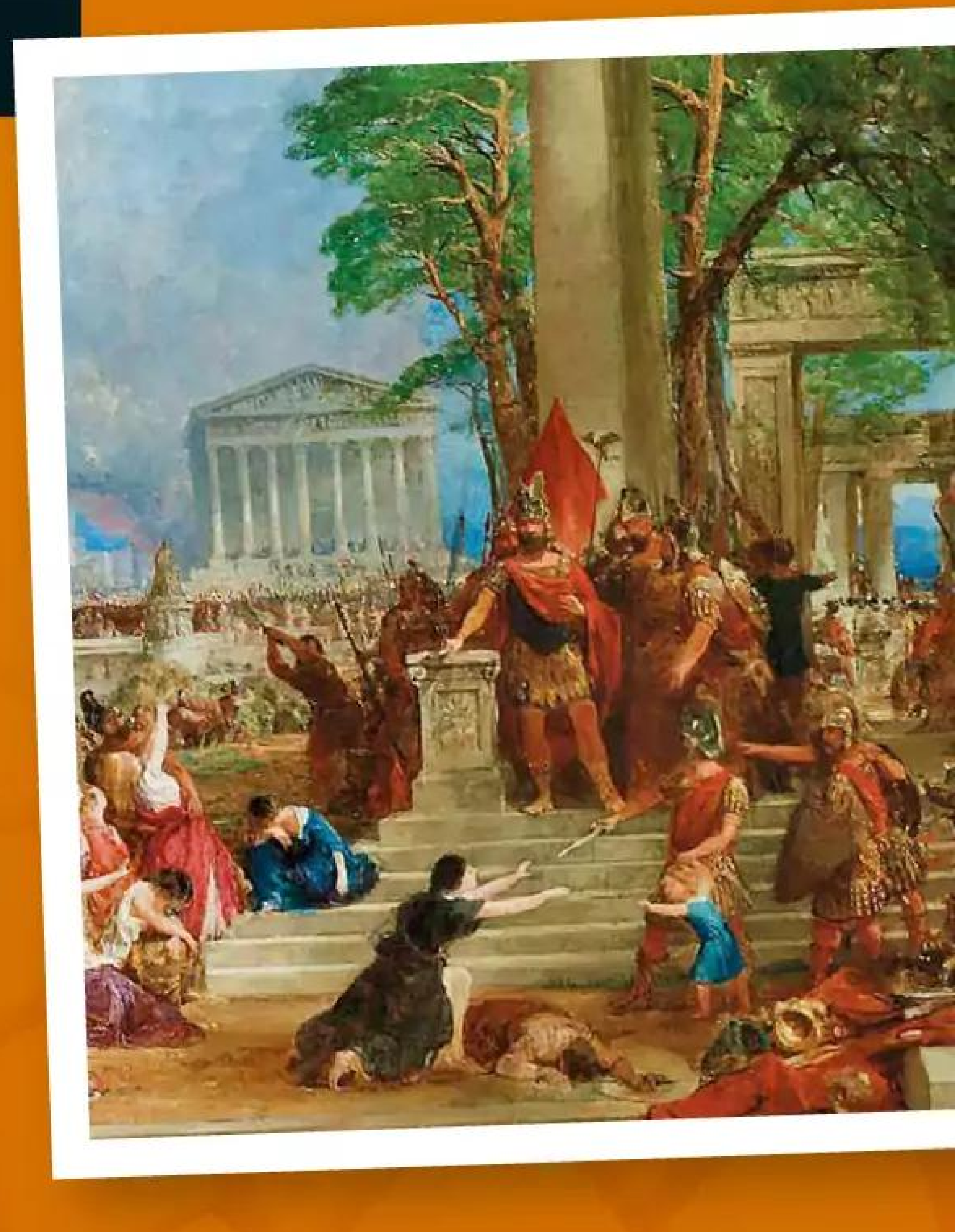
### 171–167 BC

The Third Macedonian War ends the monarchy of Macedonia, which becomes divided into four republics subservient to Rome.

### 146 BC

▶ The battle of Corinth is fought between Rome and Corinth, along with its allies in the Achaean League. Greece is defeated and becomes directly ruled by Rome. ⊙

**WORDS: EMMA SLATTERY WILLIAMS**



The Acropolis of Athens, situated high above the city, was a key religious and municipal site in ancient times

**PODCAST**

Professor Paul Cartledge discusses life in ancient Greece on the HistoryExtra podcast: historyextra.com/ancient-greece-pod

# EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT ANCIENT GREECE

**Professor Paul Cartledge** answers key questions about one of the world's greatest civilisations

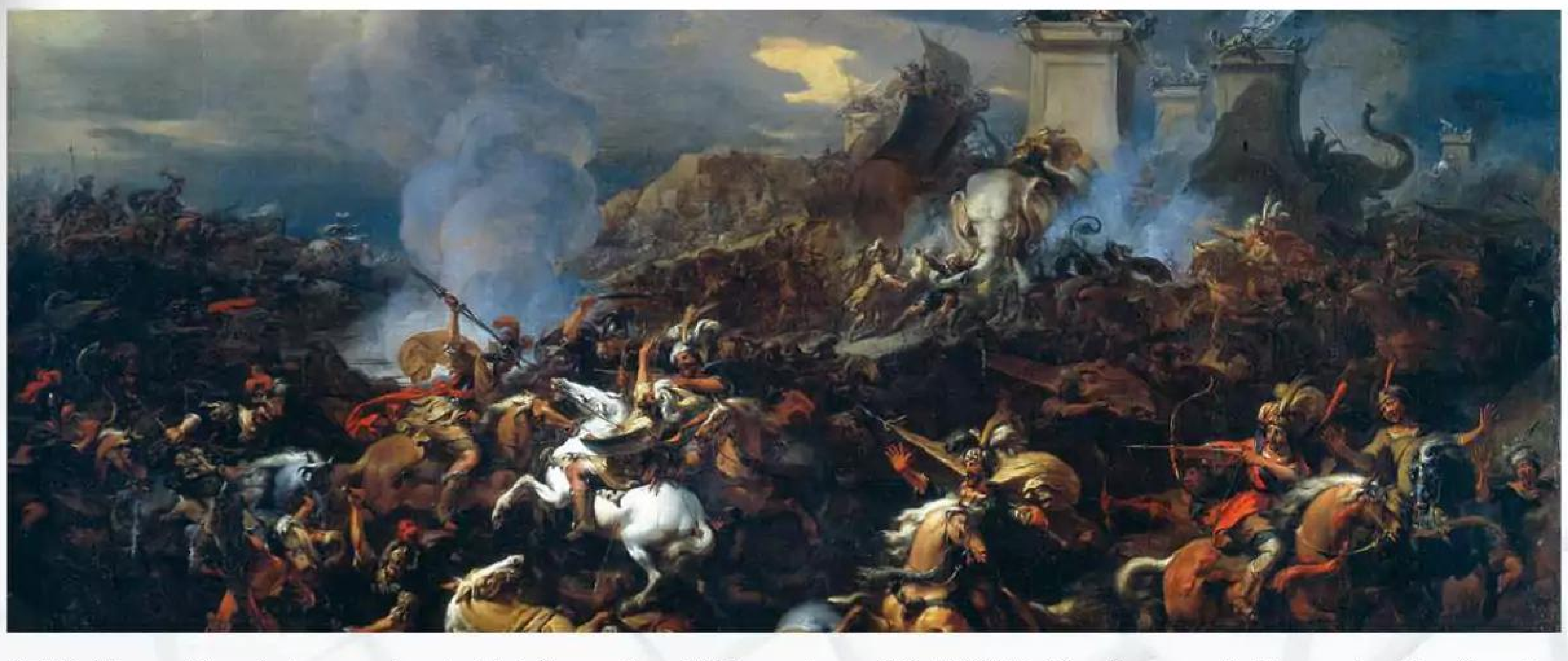
### Q: What time period do we define as ancient Greece, and which events bookend that period?

There's really no such thing as 'ancient Greece', in the sense there's a 'modern Greece'. Ancient Hellas is what the Greeks would have called it, and it was really wherever Greeks (Hellenes) lived permanently – where they made homes, spoke Greek, worshipped gods in the Greek way, and so on.

The Greek language is attested as early as c1400 BC in a script we know as Linear B – this was a syllabic script, with every sign standing for a syllable rather than a letter. Linear B was devised for a very different Greek civilisation than the one we're exploring in this essential guide. So, you could say that ancient Greece goes back as far as 1400 BC, but I would date it from around 1000 BC until the end of the Hellenistic period and the death of Cleopatra – who was an Egyptian Greek – in 30 BC. After that, the Roman period of Greek history takes over.

### Q: How many 'periods' of ancient Greece were there?

**A:** Within ancient Greece (c1000–30 BC) there were three broad periods: Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic. The beginning of the Archaic period used to be dated to 776 BC, which is the traditional year for the founding of the Olympic Games. This period goes on for about three centuries, so I would say from about 800–c480 BC. There was a turning point in the final two decades of the Archaic period when a tiny handful of Greek cities saw off a great Persian invasion (at the battles



LEFT: **Linear B script on a clay tablet from the c15th century BC** ABOVE: **The forces of Alexander the Great defeat those of India's Rajah Porus in 326 BC; the Greek king died undefeated in any major battle**

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X2, BRIDGEMAN IMAGES X1

Democracy crowns the seated *Demos* (people) of Athens in this marble stele from 337 BC

of Salamis and Plataea) and retained their independence. That's traditionally when the Classical period is seen to have started, and that middle period lasted until the death of Alexander the Great, in 323 BC. And then there was the Hellenistic period, which, as I've mentioned, lasted until 30 BC. In this final period, we see a new Greek-dominated Middle East – as far east as modern-day Afghanistan and Pakistan – that is dominantly Greek, but that incorporated a certain amount of oriental elements as well.

### Q: How did Athenian democracy differ from democracy as we know it today?

**A:** Typically, those of us who live in a democratic country have a form of democracy known generically as 'representative'. In other words, you and I, on a daily basis, do not rule: we choose people to represent us in parliament. Representative democracies differ from country to country, but they all are the same in that they choose people – representatives – who rule for them. The ancients didn't have that notion. They thought if you're going to rule; if you have power (*kratos*); if you choose officials; if you elect generals; if you sit on the council; or if you attend an assembly meeting and raise your right hand and vote, then that was it: they were 'doing' democracy. They were the ruler as well as the ruled; in other words, the Republican notion – no monarch, no single ruler and no tyrant, but everybody in turn fulfilling different roles at different times. And that included being judges. We think that the conduct of legal justice is something quite separate from legislation or holding executive office. The ancient Greeks didn't have a notion of separation of powers. So they were a direct democracy.

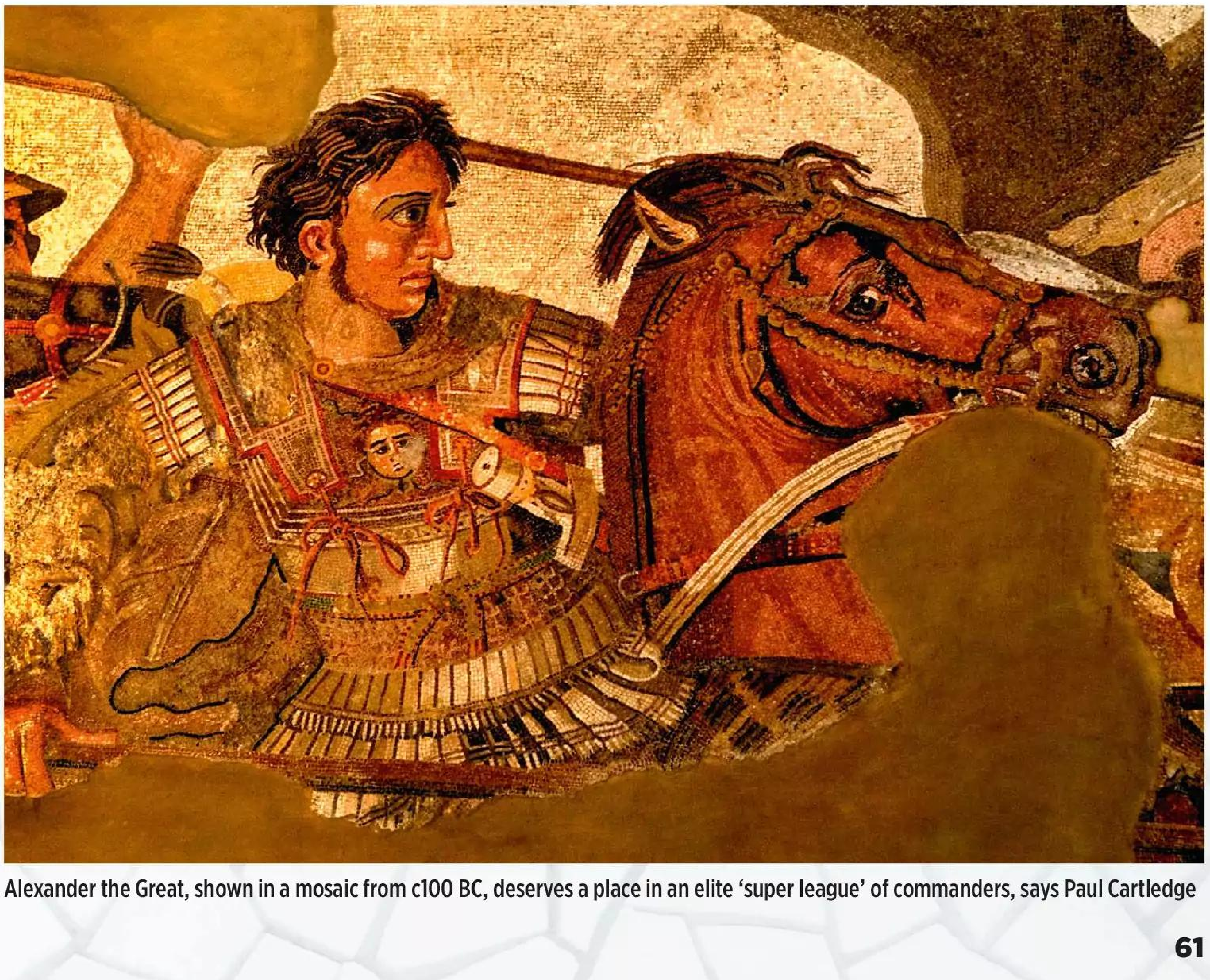
### Q: How has ancient Greek democracy influenced the way in which democracy has developed since?

**A:** Oddly enough, very little directly. The word 'democracy', coined by the ancient Greeks, is the universal term for whatever different countries decide their democracy should be. But the direct line of descent stops in ancient Greece; there is no ancient Greek-style direct democracy after the second or first century BC. When, in the early modern period, the word 'democracy' starts creeping back – especially in 17th-century England and 18th-century France and America – then democracy acquires a salience, and people start looking back to the ancient Greeks. But there was a universal agreement in the 19th century, when democracy started expanding quite considerably, that the system – partly because of size – must be indirect. It must be representative. There was, in fact, quite a lot of discussion about the dangers posed by direct democracy in ancient times, namely the danger of it shifting over into mob rule.

> "THERE IS NO ANCIENT GREEK-STYLE DEMOCRACY AFTER THE SECOND OR FIRST CENTURY BC"

### Q: Was Alexander the Great really as great as he is often made out to be?

**A:** Alexander III actually acquired the nickname 'the Great' after his death, but he was certainly unparalleled as a conqueror. As the commander of forces, both in pitched battle and sieges, and in traversing vast unknown terrains, he, quite frankly, was in a league with leaders like Genghis Khan – an elite 'super league' of commanders, if you like. One of the extraordinary things about Alexander the Great was that, technically, he was never defeated in ▶



Alexander the Great, shown in a mosaic from c100 BC, deserves a place in an elite 'super league' of commanders, says Paul Cartledge

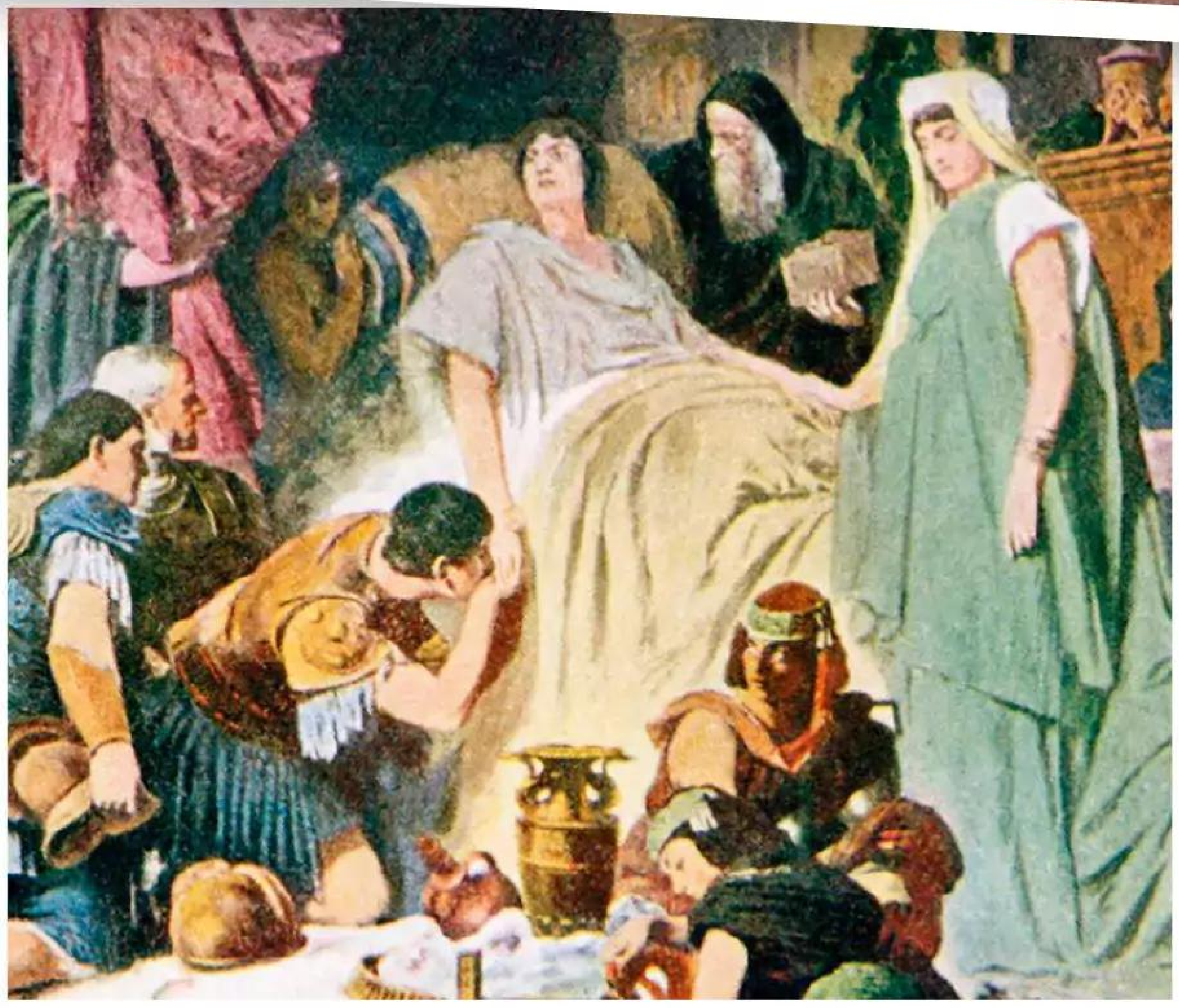
◀ any battle that made a difference. There were skirmishes when leaders under him were defeated, for example, but he personally never suffered a single failure as a general. And that's really quite an extraordinary feat.

Alexander came to the throne at the age of just 20, after the assassination of his father, Philip II. But he had been commanding armies since the age of 16, and by the time he was 18, he was his father's right-hand man in battle. By 330 BC, Alexander had effectively defeated the Persian empire, but it wasn't enough for him: he then made the decision to push on to what he thought were the outer limits of the entire inhabited world.

## Q: How did Alexander die?

**A:** Well, the evidence for such a climactic event is very confused so we're not sure how, or from what, he actually died in 323 BC. He may have been killed by one of his warlords – some of them would fight for the next 50 or so years over the land Alexander had conquered, and would eventually carve it up into three major kingdoms. Or his death could have been from natural causes. We just don't know for certain.

RIGHT: **The so-called Alexander Sarcophagus, named for its carvings of the Greek leader, never held his body**



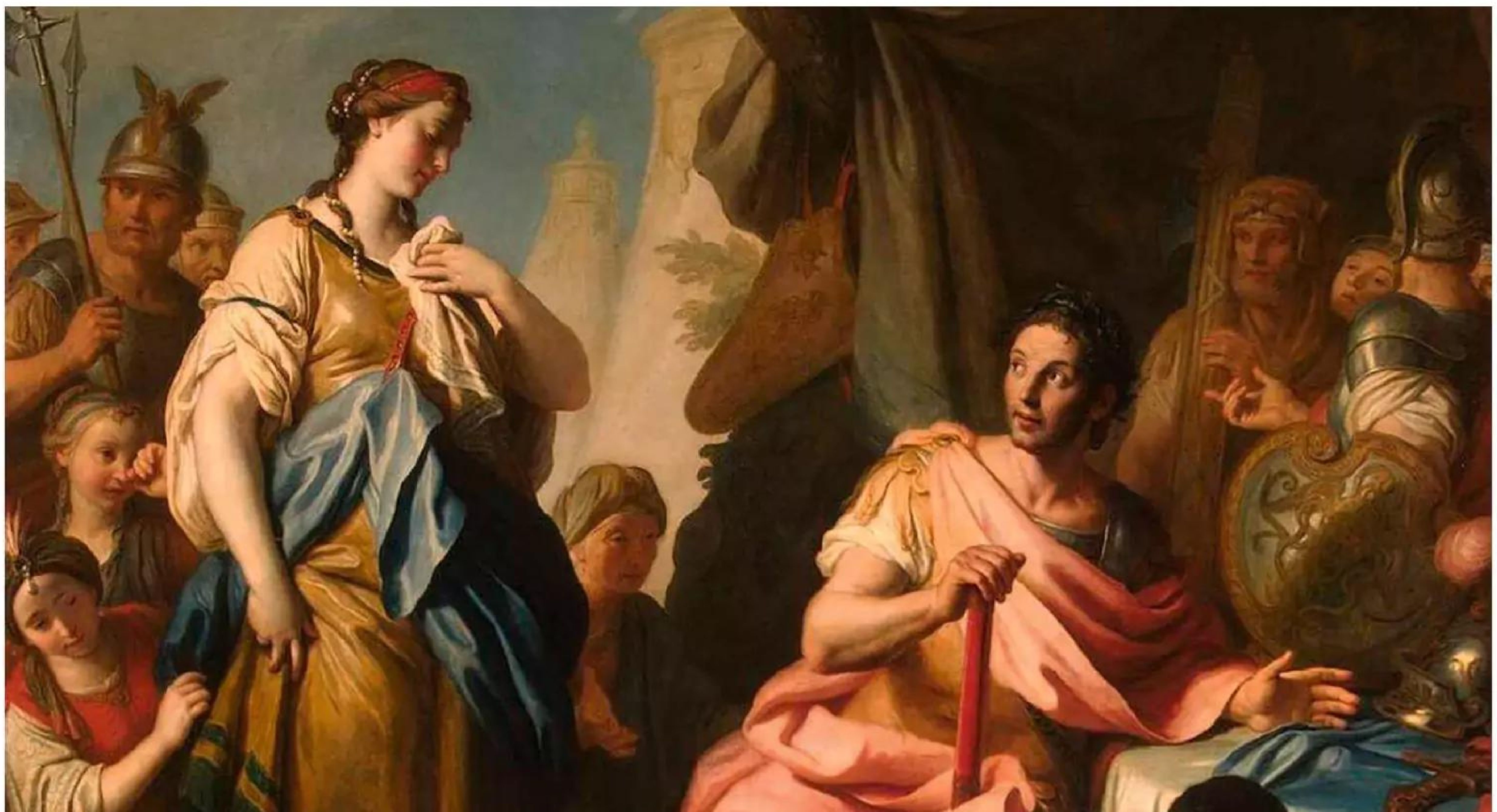
BELOW RIGHT: **Alexander depicted on his deathbed. The cause of his demise is still unknown**

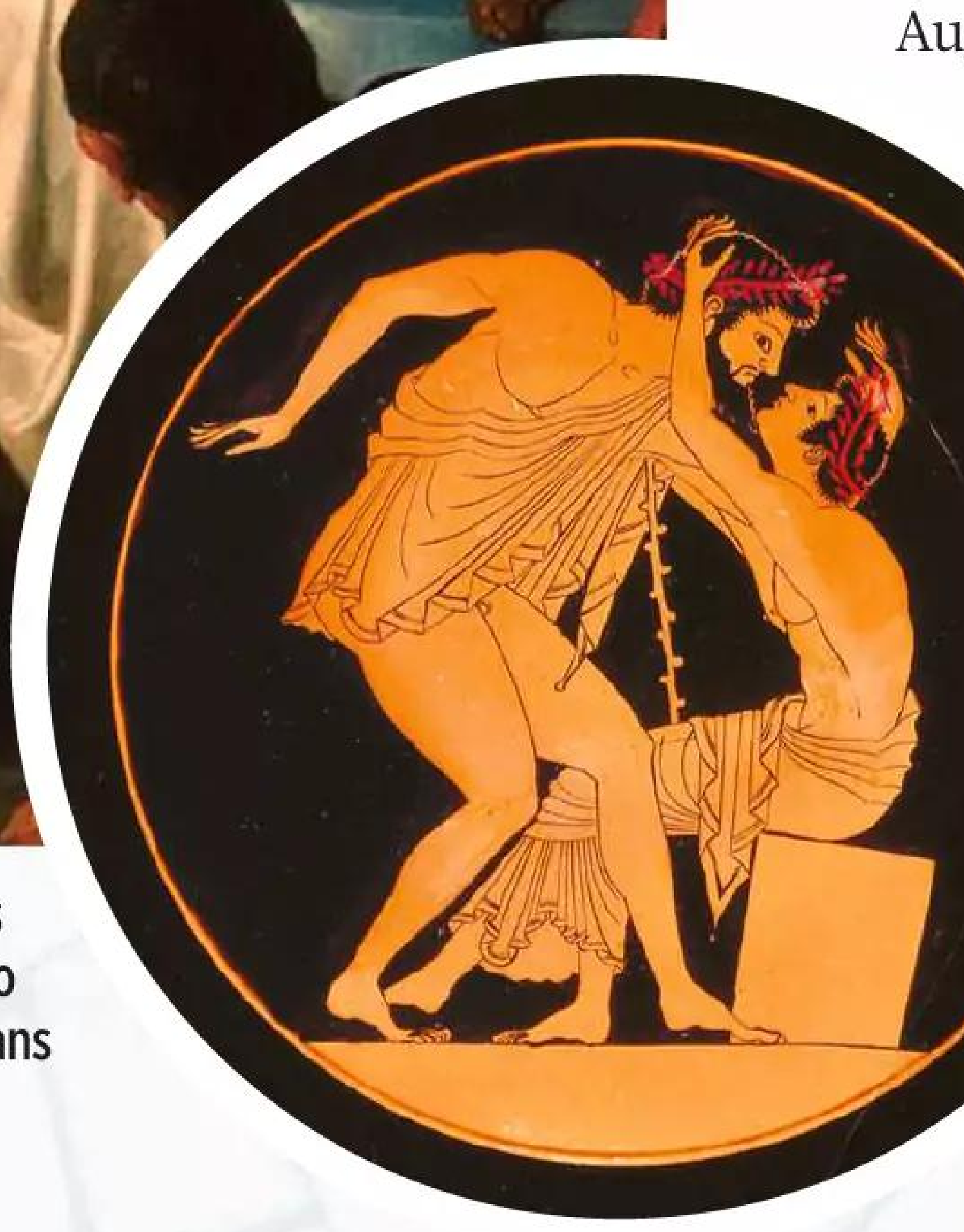
The main problem was that Alexander died without a living male heir. He had three wives, one of whom, Roxana – from Sogdiana or Bactria, in modern-day Afghanistan – was pregnant at the time of his death and later gave birth to a son (Alexander IV). But both Roxana and her son were murdered by one of the many rivals for Alexander's kingdom, which just shows you how murderous, how vicious the struggle for power was after his death.

## Q: Where is Alexander buried?

**A:** His tomb has never been found but there is really, in terms of our evidence, only one site in which he conceivably was buried, and as far as we know, his remains have never since been moved from there. And that's Alexandria in Egypt. Alexander died in Babylon and his corpse was mummified so that it could be transported to the capital of Macedonia, a place called Pella in what is now northern Greece. But as it was passing through Damascus in Syria, the funeral procession was interrupted by Ptolemy I – Alexander's former general who, after his death, became ruler of Egypt. Ptolemy effectively hijacked the corpse and took it to what was then his capital, Memphis in Egypt. Alexander had designated Alexandria to be the new capital of Greek Egypt, so his corpse was eventually transferred from Memphis to Alexandria and given a fantastic burial with great ceremony, and placed in a tomb with glass over the top so that his mummified corpse could be viewed. And that's the last we know for sure of where his remains were.

There's a famous story that claims Augustus, the first Roman emperor of Egypt after the death of Cleopatra, made a pilgrimage to the tomb to see the corpse of Alexander. He is said to have been so keen to look at the corpse that he knocked its nose off! At any rate, I have no doubt that Alexander is buried somewhere in Alexandria.





ABOVE: **Alexander the Great with his wife, Roxana, shown in a 1756 painting. The king is known to have had three spouses in total** RIGHT: **An image from c500 BC shows two males embracing. Homosexuality was accepted by the ancient Greeks, but not the Romans**

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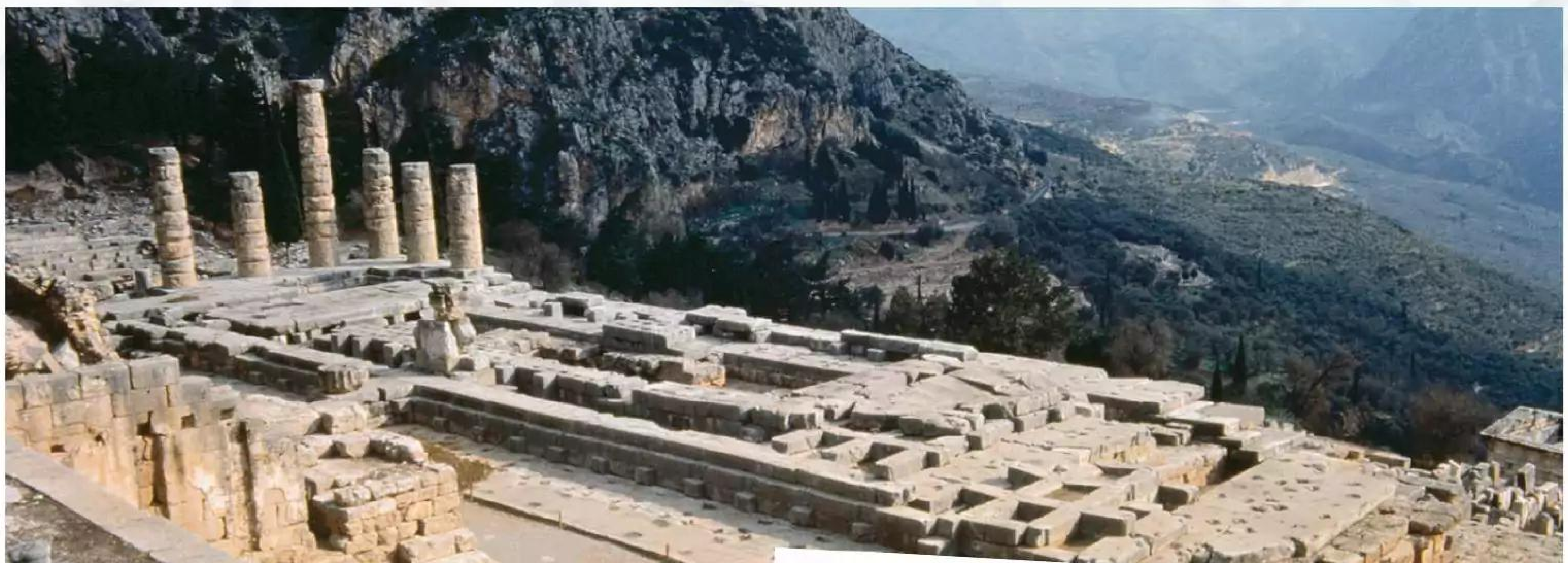
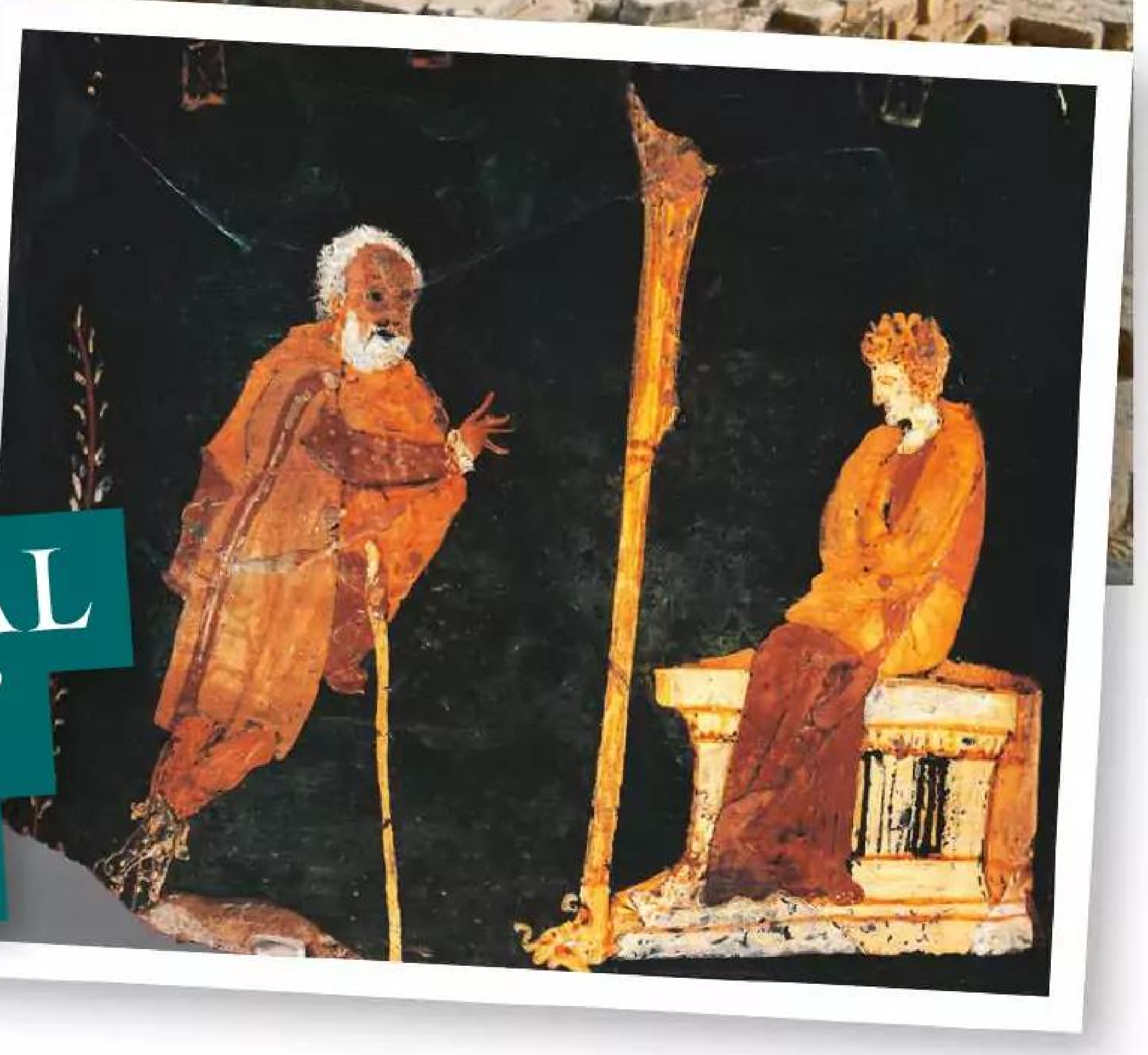




ABOVE: **An individual consults Pythia, the Delphic Oracle, on this vase fragment from the fourth century BC**

TOP: **The remains of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, where ancient Greeks would seek godly advice**

## Q: Why were homosexuality and bisexuality accepted in ancient Greece but not in Rome?

**A:** It's very, very hard to say. I think one possible explanation is that if you conquer a people and you think yourself, therefore, superior to them, you look for the things that differentiate your civilisation from theirs. And the Romans singled out their abhorrence, their rejection, of this 'deviant custom' of homosexuality among the Greeks, which they thought was effeminate. So I think that's the answer: the Romans conquered the Greeks; Greeks were therefore seen as feeble; and one manifestation of their feebleness was seen to be their acceptance of homosexuality.

> “THE LIVER AND ENTRAILS OF A SACRIFICED ANIMAL WOULD BE ‘READ’ BEFORE BATTLE”

## Q: Where was religion practised in ancient Greece?

**A:** There were specific sites of worship. The ancient Greeks actually had a word that meant a 'cut out space', where a sanctuary, which might or might not include a temple, was sited. So there were shrines and distinct religious spaces.

But religion was really practised everywhere. If you went to battle, you would slaughter an animal before that battle to get the will of the gods. The liver and entrails of the sacrificed animal would be removed and 'read' by *manteis* (seers); if the readings were favourable, you would go into battle. If they weren't, you didn't.

At home, you would have a statue of Hermes just outside your back door. You would pour a libation – wine, olive oil or some other liquid – and that would be your way of making your peace with the gods. There was a notion of there being a type of contract between mortals and the gods – if you, the human, did the gods favours, looked after them and gave them their due, then the gods were bound by contract to do you a favour in return. It was a give and take relationship.

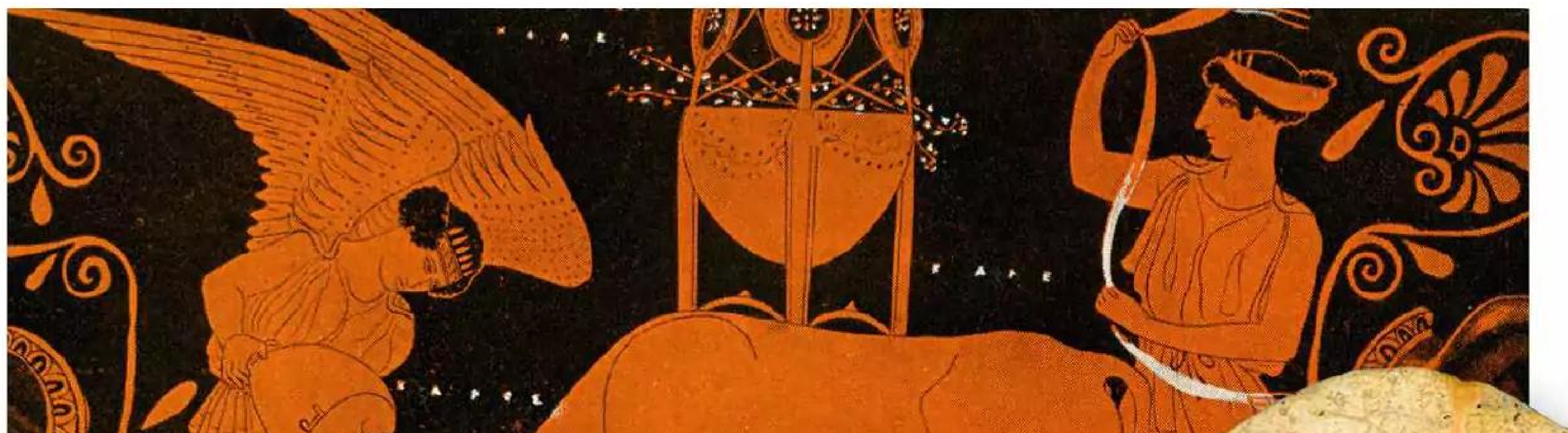
Religion was everywhere, in principle, and just about any phenomenon could have a religious interpretation. A rainbow, for example, was a goddess called Iris; the Sun was the god Helios. So the ancient Greeks were incredibly religious, and that's why it's a bit of a paradox that some Greeks were able to draw a distinction and actually even question whether the gods – Zeus, Hermes and so on – were real, or whether they were figments of human imagination. In other words, we see the beginnings of atheism through humanism, as well as most Greeks being what we would call very religious.

## Q: What role did Oracles play?

**A:** The Delphic Oracle – the high priestess of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi – was the most significant because it was thought to be the most holy and authoritative. You could consult an oracle by various means – by listening to the cooing of doves or by getting a prophecy, a form of utterance meant to be directly inspired by, in this case, Apollo. And that would tell you an answer to a question.

There were actually two main types of oracle: one was the public, official one, which advised a city or an individual ruler. The other was the purely individual type, which a lot of Greeks at one or other point in their life – typically during life crises such as marriages, births and deaths – would consult. ⊙

**INTERVIEW: EMMA MASON**



LEFT: **Animal sacrifice and offerings were important ways to honour and appease the gods**

BELOW: **A terracotta sheep liver – a votive offering to the gods**

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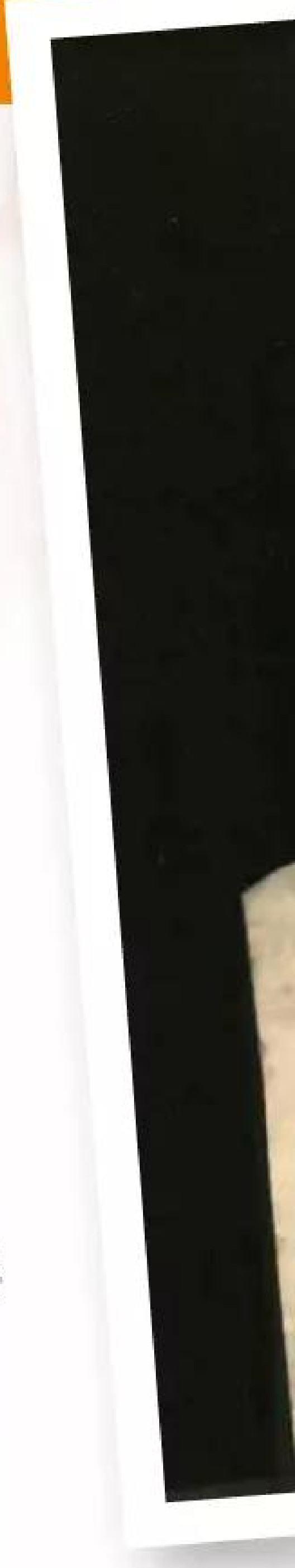
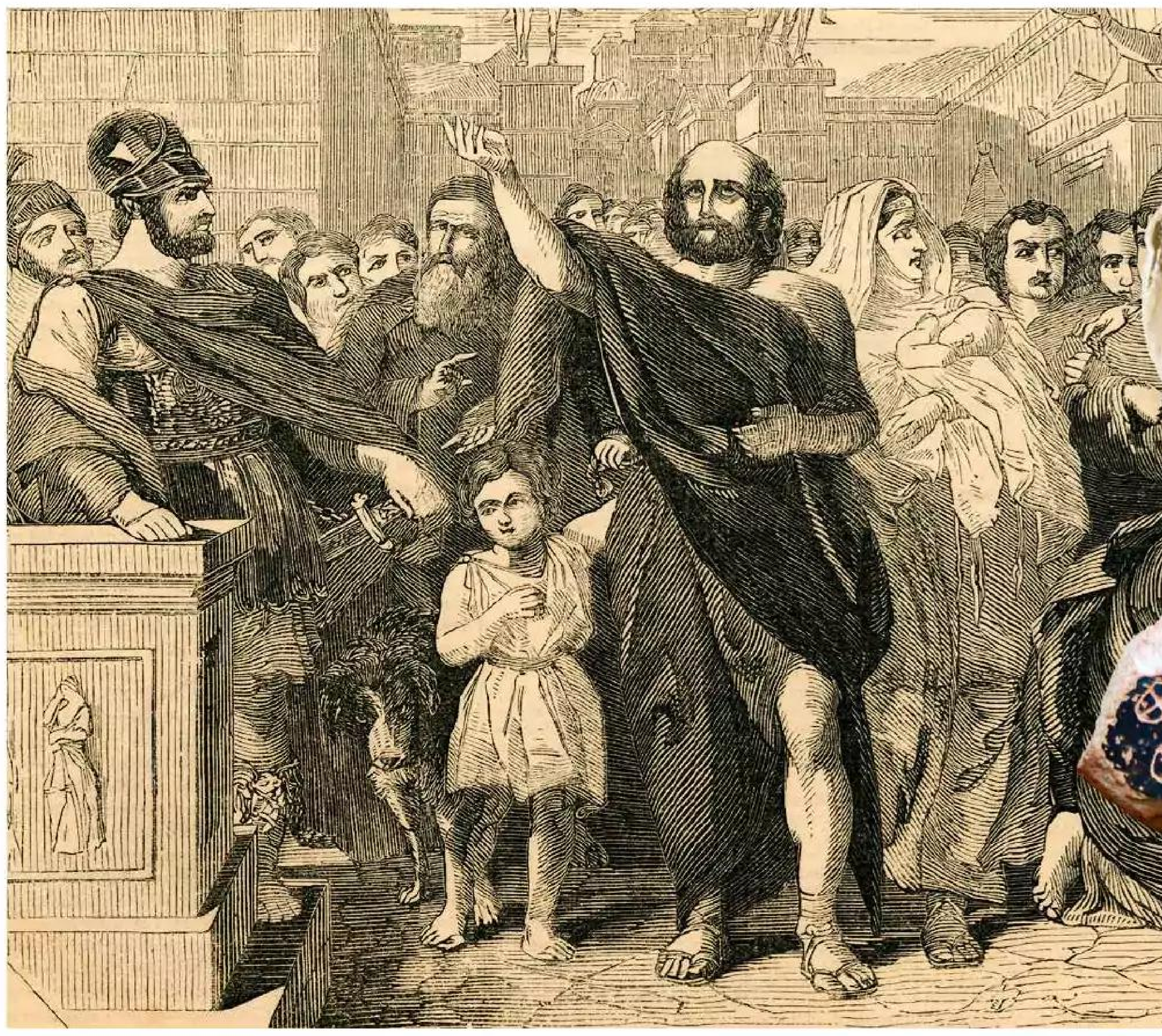
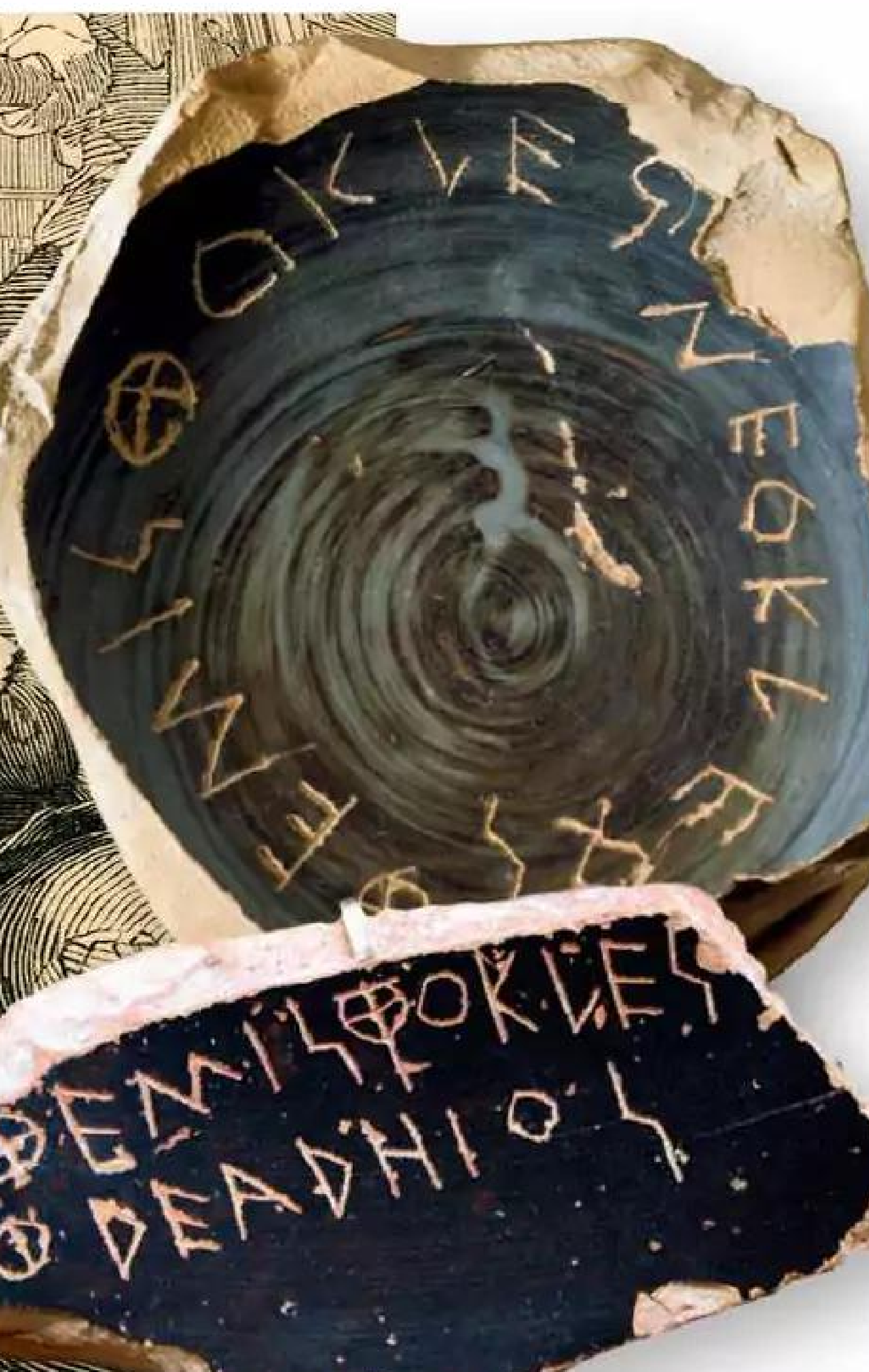
**PROFESSOR PAUL CARTLEDGE** is AG Leventis Senior Research Fellow and Emeritus AG Leventis Professor of Greek Culture at the University of Cambridge. His books include *Thebes: The Forgotten City of Ancient Greece* (Picador, 2021)



# THE BIRTHPLACE OF DEMOCRACY

Athens was ruled by people power for nearly two centuries, establishing a model of politics that would resonate long afterwards





ABOVE: **Athenians could vote to exile fellow citizens by writing the person's name on a sherd of pottery known as an *ostracon***

ABOVE LEFT: **The politician Aristides was briefly ostracised in c482 BC. According to one story, he was asked to scratch his own name on a sherd by an illiterate man who did not recognise him**

The word 'democracy' comes from the Greek *demokratia* – *demos* meaning 'people' and *kratos* 'power' – and the birthplace of that system of government now held above all others around the world was the Greek city-state of Athens. This ancient form of people power did not resemble today's representative democracies, where the people elect someone to act on their behalf, but was a direct democracy in which all citizens could participate in making laws and serving in the bodies that governed them.

Under the principle of *ho boulomenos* (anyone who wishes), Athenian citizens had the right to attend, address and vote in the *ekklesia*, the assembly held every 10 days or so to carry out the political agenda. The meeting place was a hill less than a mile from the Acropolis called the Pnyx, with a space large enough for at least 6,000 citizens. Each session began with a ritual sacrifice before anyone could approach the *bema*, a flat-stone platform, and speak with total freedom of speech.

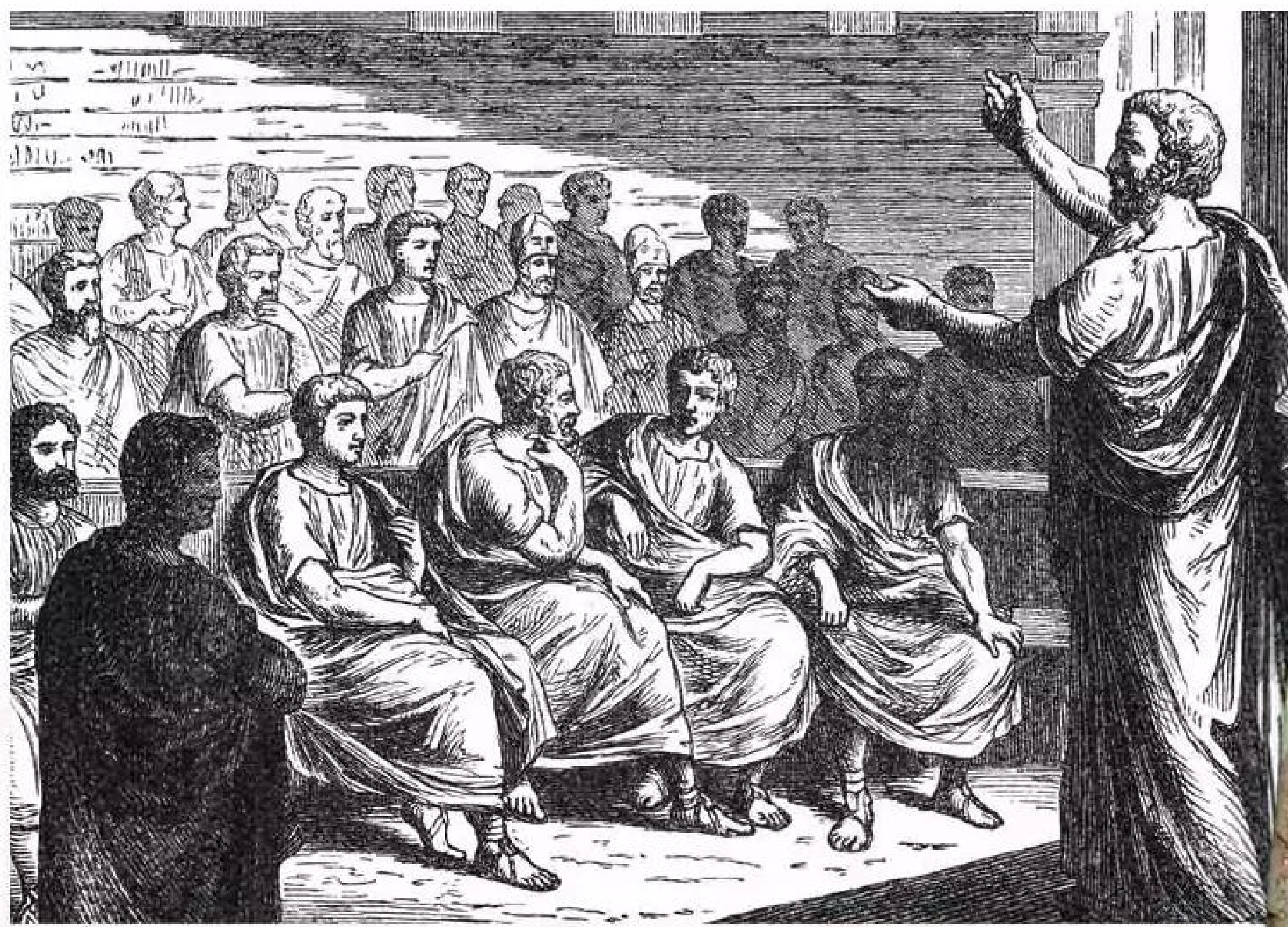
The *ekklesia* covered areas of policy from declaration of war and military organisation to raising money, maintaining food supplies, nominating magistrates, arranging trials and agreeing on legislation. Votes were held by raising hands, or if this could not determine a winner, then stones would be used to cast ballots. In the special case of ostracism, any Athenian could be sent into exile for 10 years, and so be ostracised, as long as a majority of the minimum necessary 6,000 voters agreed by writing the name of that person on a piece of pottery, called an *ostracon*.

## DOING ONE'S DUTY

Setting the agenda was the *boule*, an advisory council tasked with administering the day-to-day business of government, including finance. Its 500 volunteer members were not elected, but randomly selected from the citizenry by drawing lots – a method called sortition, aimed at eliminating corruption as the wealthy could not buy their way into office. To further curb the power-hungry, each member had to be over 30, was limited to serving one year, and could only be in the *boule* for two non-consecutive years during their life.

The same method was used to populate the courts, or *dikasteria*. Every year, 6,000 citizens over the age of 30 were chosen by lot to be jurors and magistrates. Each case, brought by a citizen, had a jury several hundred strong. Only a handful of positions would actually be elected to ensure that someone possessing the right skills or training held the office, most importantly that of the generals. Otherwise, the complex system of the *ekklesia*, *boule*, *dikasteria* and dozens of smaller bodies was intended to keep democracy from being corrupted into an autocracy.

Yet Athenian democracy was vulnerable to powerful figures dominating the process. Critics argued that ignorant and unskilled voters could be swayed by a talented orator or demagogue (a leader who makes use of popular prejudices and false claims and promises to gain power) – such as after the battle of Arginusae in 406 BC when, despite Athens winning, six of the eight generals were tried and executed based on confusing information. Ostracism, too, could be used to get rid of a rival or



ABOVE: **An illustration of the *boule*, which comprised 500 members randomly selected from the citizens of Athens**
RIGHT: **A decree issued by the *boule* and *ekklesia* – or council and assembly, 445 BC**

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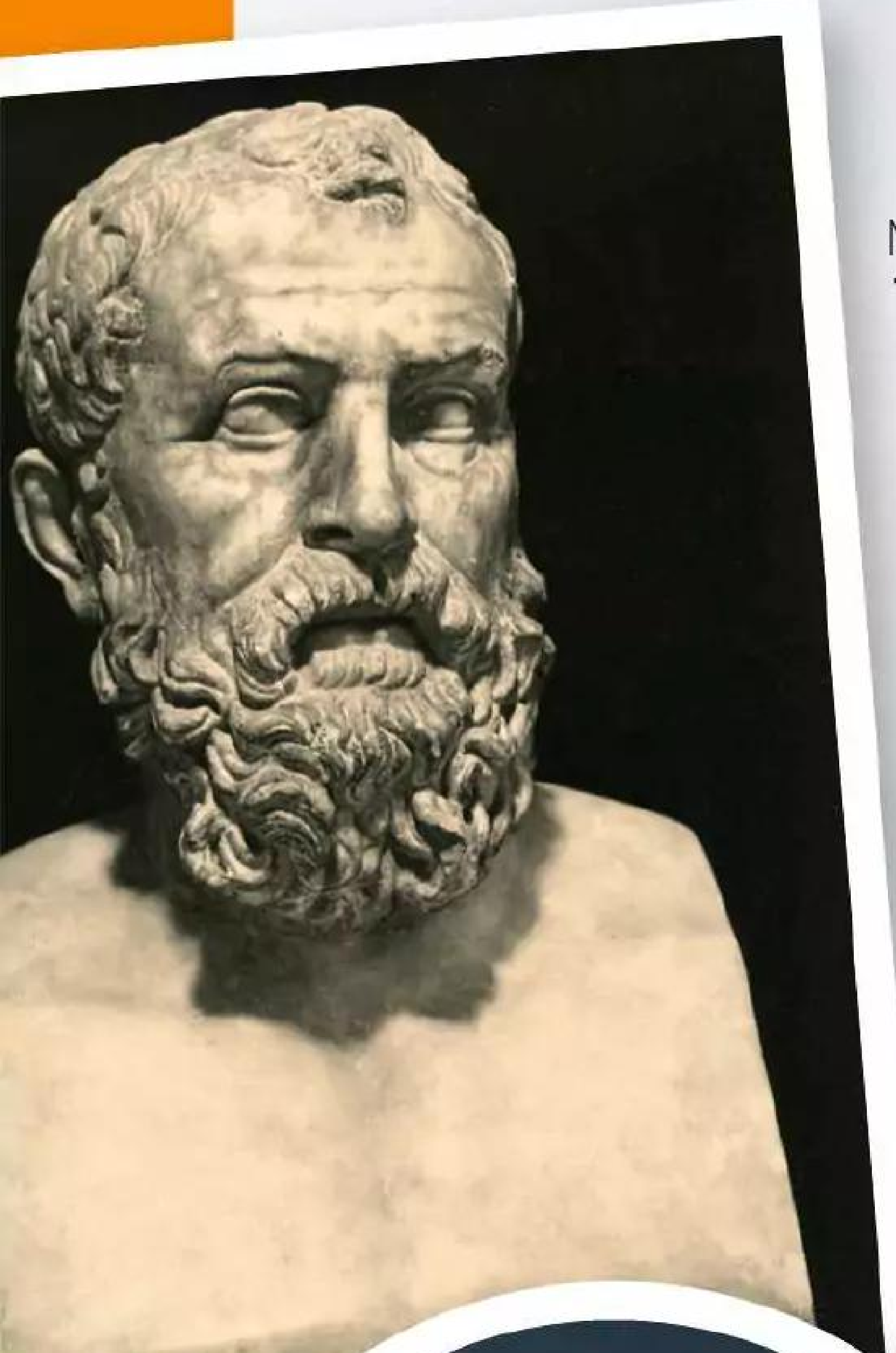
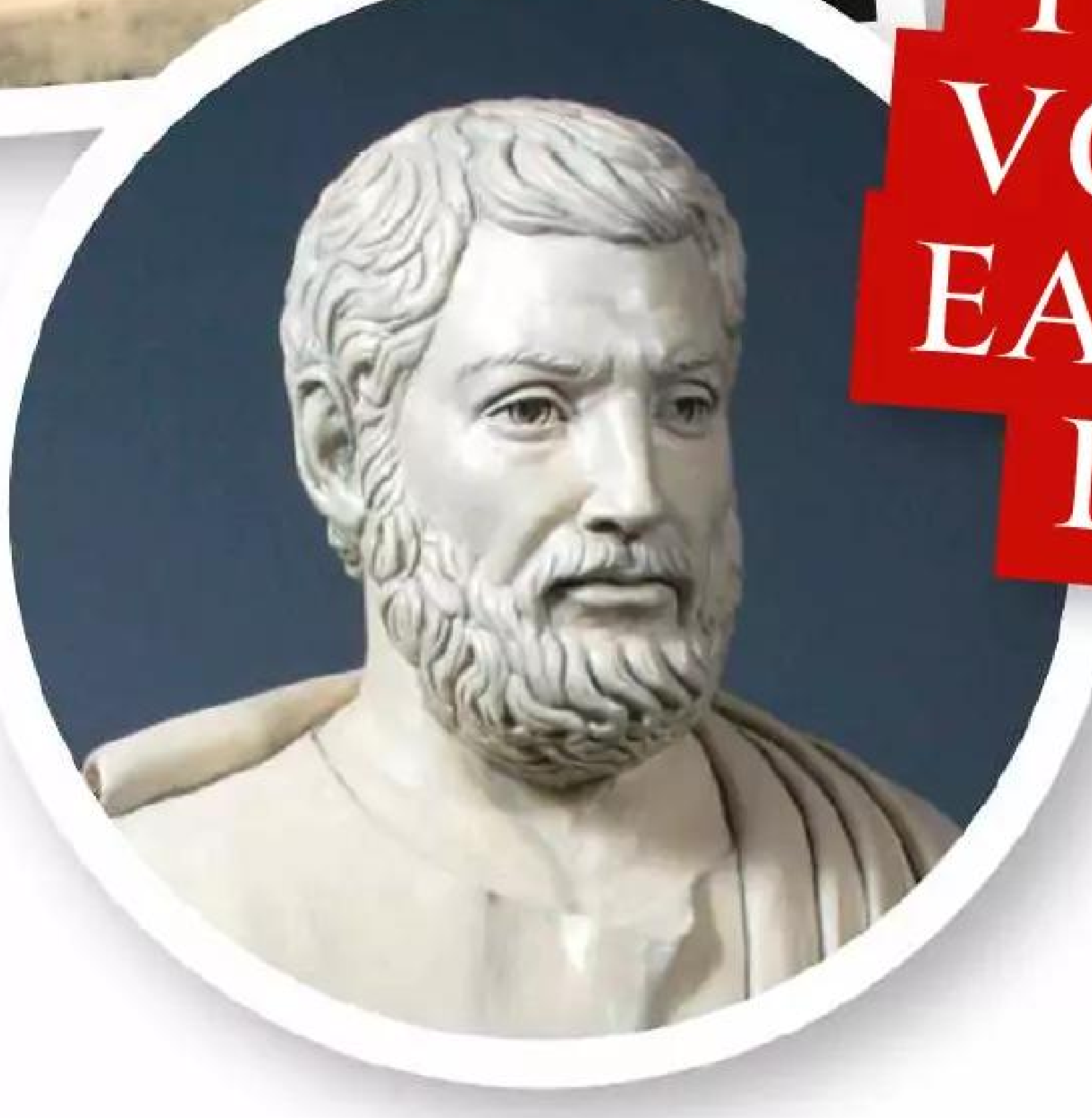


MAIN: A statue of the mythical king, Theseus. According to legend, he united Attica under one rule

LEFT: The statesman Solon dabbled with an early form of democracy during the early sixth century BC

BELOW: Cleisthenes reformed the Athenian constitution in c508 BC, helping to ensure that a citizen's rights were not decided by birth



> “CRITICS ARGUED THAT IGNORANT VOTERS COULD BE EASILY SWAYED BY DEMAGOGUES”

unpopular figure.

Women, slaves and foreigners were excluded from participating. So even though Athens had a population of around 250,000 in the fifth century BC, the actual citizen body numbered only 30,000 on average and peaked at 50,000 to 60,000. Within that, only a few thousand attended the *ekklesia* and volunteered for offices. Compared to the autocracies and oligarchies in other Greek city-states, however, Athens still boasted a huge politically active population, and democracy came to be seen as more than a right: it was a civic duty.

Athens was not actually unique in attempting to introduce such a system of government in Greece, but its democracy was by far the most advanced, the longest-running and best recorded in antiquity. Traditionally, three men have been celebrated as its founders, starting with the mythical king Theseus, the conqueror of the Minotaur who united Attica and first demonstrated how the Athenians would rule themselves.

The second man was the statesman Solon. In the early sixth century BC, he introduced sweeping changes and a new constitution that redefined citizenship and the political structure: splitting the population into four groups based on land production and granting rights according to wealth, not birth. This was a radical shift away from the aristocracy, and the poorest could now vote in the assembly. While Solon's reforms did not last once Athenian noble families broke out into factional fighting, they laid a foundation for another experiment in democracy at the end of the century.

The third, and true, founder of democracy was Cleisthenes. Previously elected as *archon* (chief magistrate) under the tyrant Hippias, he had been forced out of Athens before returning at the invitation of the people. Athenians, fearing attacks from other Greek city-states like Sparta and invasion from Persia, had grown more hostile to the norm of autocratic rule, which laid the foundations for a new political system established by Cleisthenes' bottom-up reforms.

### EXTERNAL THREATS

In c507 BC, Cleisthenes created 139 small territorial entities across Attica called *demes*, and decreed that all Athenian men over 18 had to register at one in order to become a citizen. The *deme* transformed the political map so that a citizen's rights depended on the locality rather than entitlement by birth. Cleisthenes then gathered all Athenians, which meant everyone in Attica, into 10 groups, or tribes, breaking the existing aristocratic power structure. The *boule*, which was expanded from Solon's 400 to 500, would be made up of 50 men from each tribe.

Thus, Athenian democracy was born. Its early years brought several serious threats both by rival city-states and two Persian invasions, but in all cases, Athens and its ideology prevailed. The Persian forces of Darius I were defeated at the battle of Marathon in 490 BC, and then the invasion a decade later by his son, Xerxes I, ended with the naval battle of Salamis and the land battle of Plataea.

The next century saw more political changes, most notably by the statesman Ephialtes, and the temporary dismantling of democracy after the Peloponnesian War, which ended with Sparta installing a brutal oligarchy in Athens. Democracy may have been restored and revamped – including citizens being given an allowance to attend the *ekklesia* – but it did not make it through the fourth century BC, being dismantled c322 BC following the failure of the Greek revolt against Macedonian rule. The structure built by Cleisthenes, on foundations by Solon, may have been gone, yet the idea of people power had changed the world, and endured. ⊙

**WORDS: JONNY WILKES**

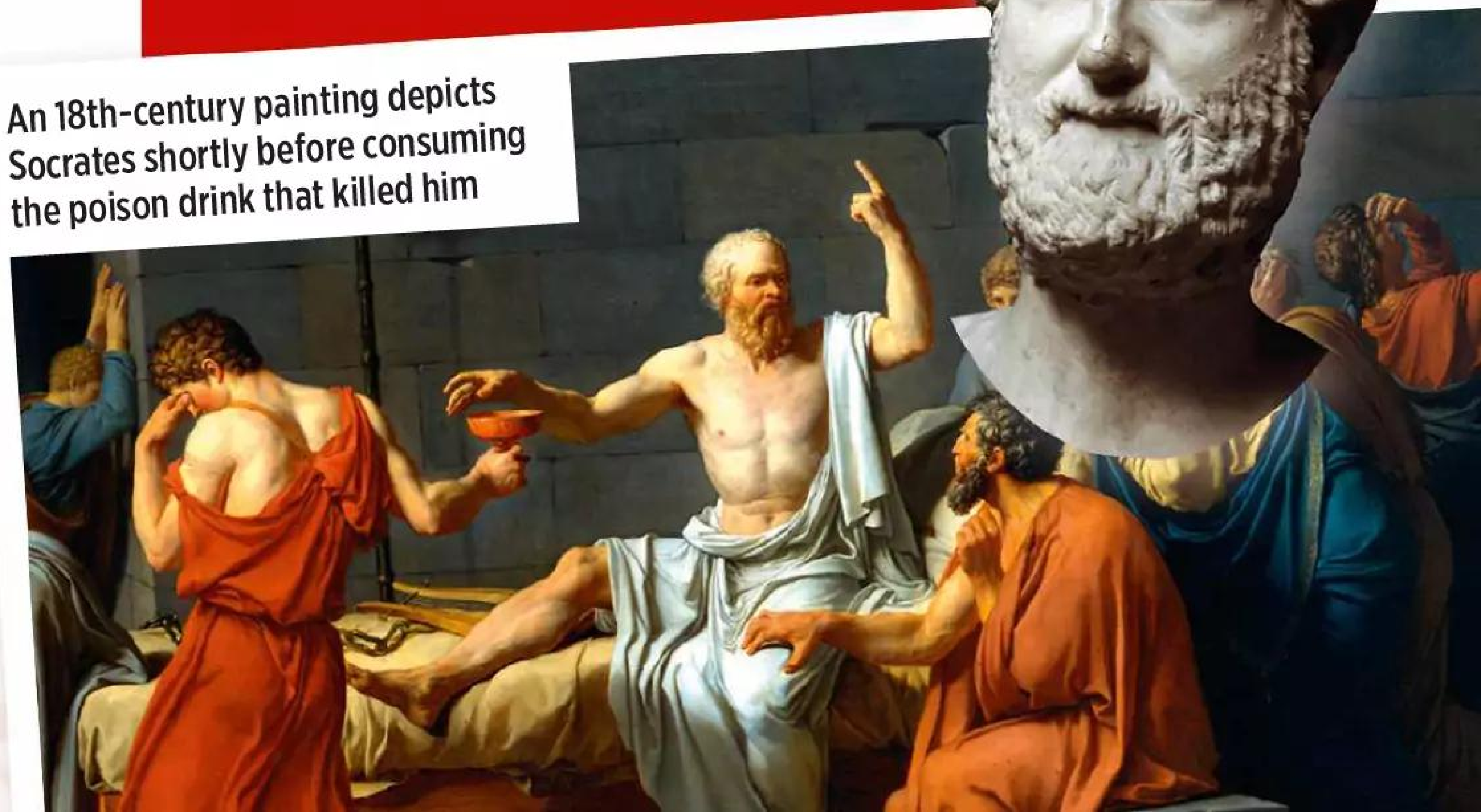
## FIGHT THE PEOPLE POWER

### Not everyone in Athens gave the idea of democracy their vote…

**Even though Athenian democracy far from gave all people political representation, there were intellectuals and leaders at the time who condemned the system as too inclusive. Critics warned of mob rule or, at least, a poor majority of citizens in the *ekklesia* who were ignorant and untrained, and so predisposed to get decisions wrong. To make this point, Socrates compared politics to a ship, which needed a skilled captain rather than just anyone attempting to navigate.**

**The general and revered historian Thucydides, playwright Aristophanes, and the so-called ‘Old Oligarch’, author of the pamphlet *The Constitution of the Athenians*, all agreed that democracy would breed corruption and demagoguery. Among the strongest opponents, however, was Plato (a pupil of Socrates). He did have cause to be sceptical: in 399 BC, his beloved teacher had been sentenced to death by a jury of 501 randomly selected Athenians using the democratic method of sortition.**

The playwright Aristophanes criticised democracy's shortcomings



An 18th-century painting depicts Socrates shortly before consuming the poison drink that killed him

# WIVES, MOTHERS AND WORKERS

Some city-states were worlds apart when it came to female emancipation, but Greek society still very much revolved around men

In popular depictions of ancient Greece, the mythical Amazons loom large. A tribe of independent, fierce and powerful warriors, their legend is inspired by real nomadic women who lived in the Eurasian Steppe – and it's very revealing about the roles women played in Greek society. For the ancients, these strong women represented a threat to the patriarchal order, and most versions of the myth see them tricked and overcome by the hero Herakles, the ultimate symbol of masculine strength.

For the ancient Greek ideal, you might instead look to Penelope, the wife of Odysseus in Homer's *Odyssey*. Beset by more than a hundred suitors, she remains calm, dedicated to her domestic duties, and, most importantly by the standard of the day, loyal to her husband.

When considering the lives of ancient Greek women, though, it's important, says classicist Paul Cartledge, to distinguish between different Greek city-states. While many sources of the period come from Athens, we cannot assume that women's role in Athenian society was representative of the lives of women across the rest of Greece. The lives of Spartan women would have been very different from their Athenian sisters, as we'll see over these two pages.

Another key difference is status. While no woman would have found themselves on equal footing with men in ancient Greek society, the lives of women would have greatly depended upon how wealthy their father or husband was. Greater wealth did not necessarily mean they enjoyed greater freedom, though. "If you were a woman in Athens, the richer you were, broadly speaking, the more confined you were," explains Cartledge.

Here, we take a closer look at the different elements of women's lives in ancient Greece…

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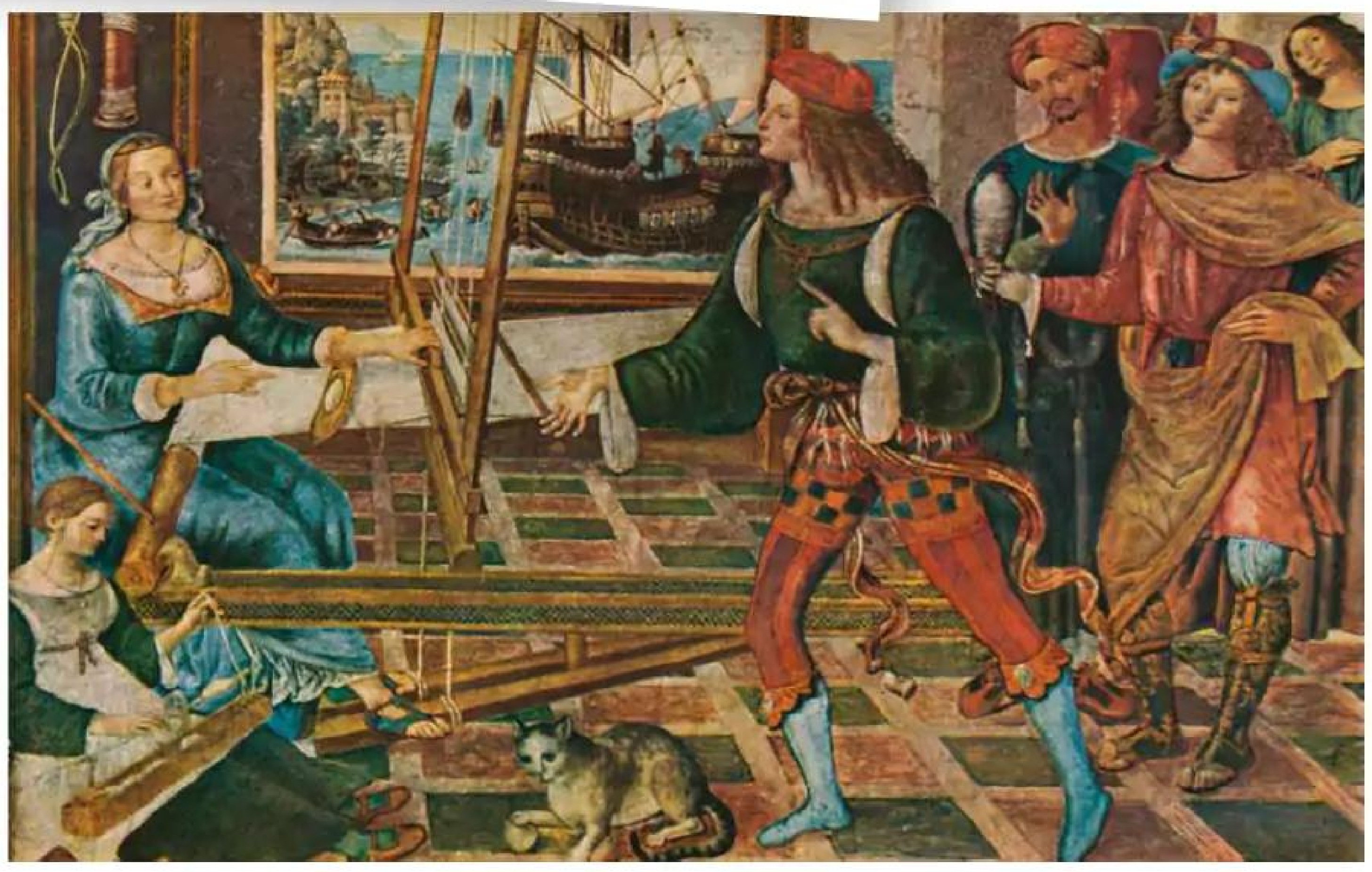
LEFT: **A marble relief shows Greek soldiers fighting the Amazons – a mythical group of female warriors**

BELOW: **In Homer's *Odyssey*, Penelope demonstrates her loyalty to her husband when beset by suitors**

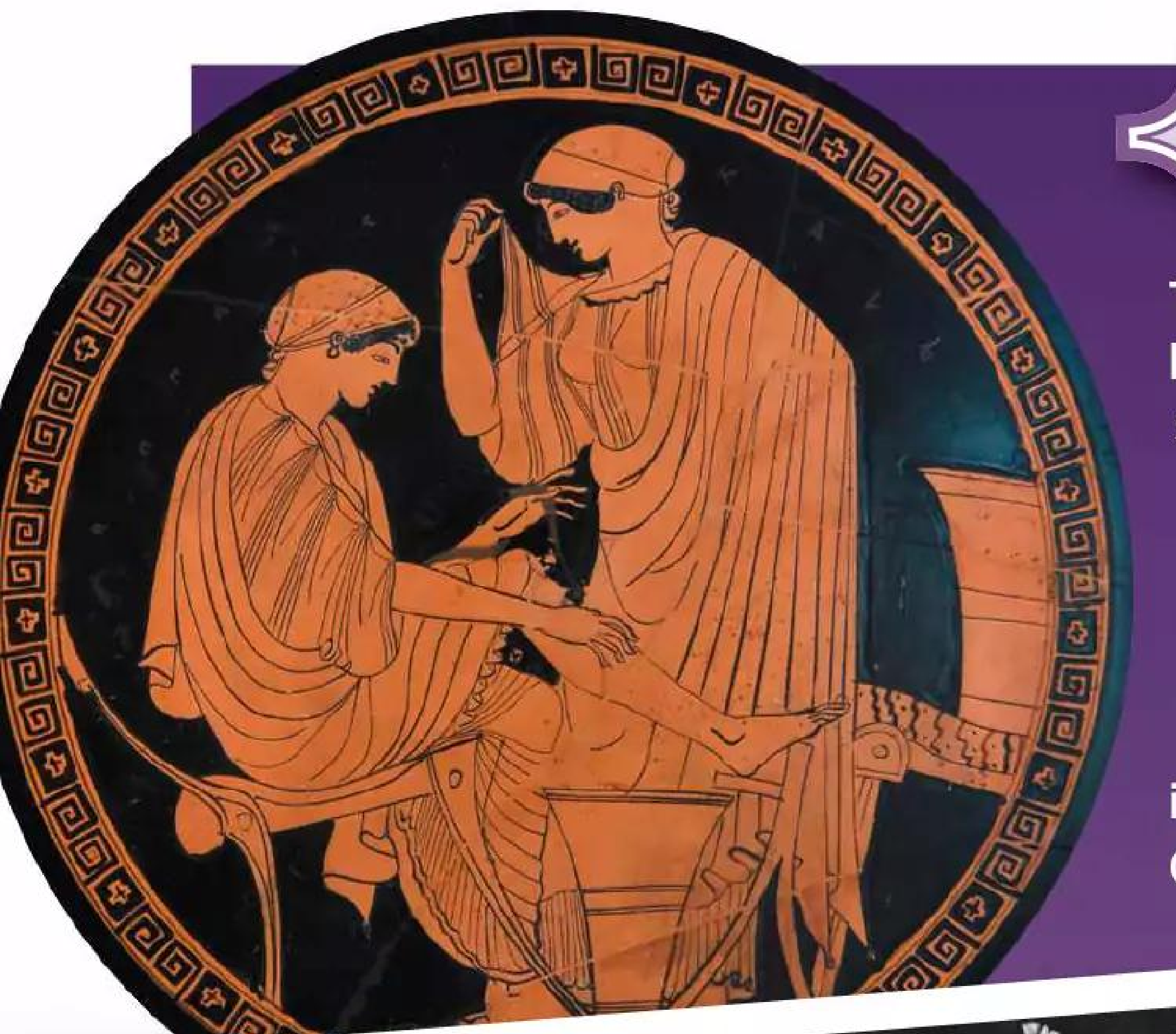


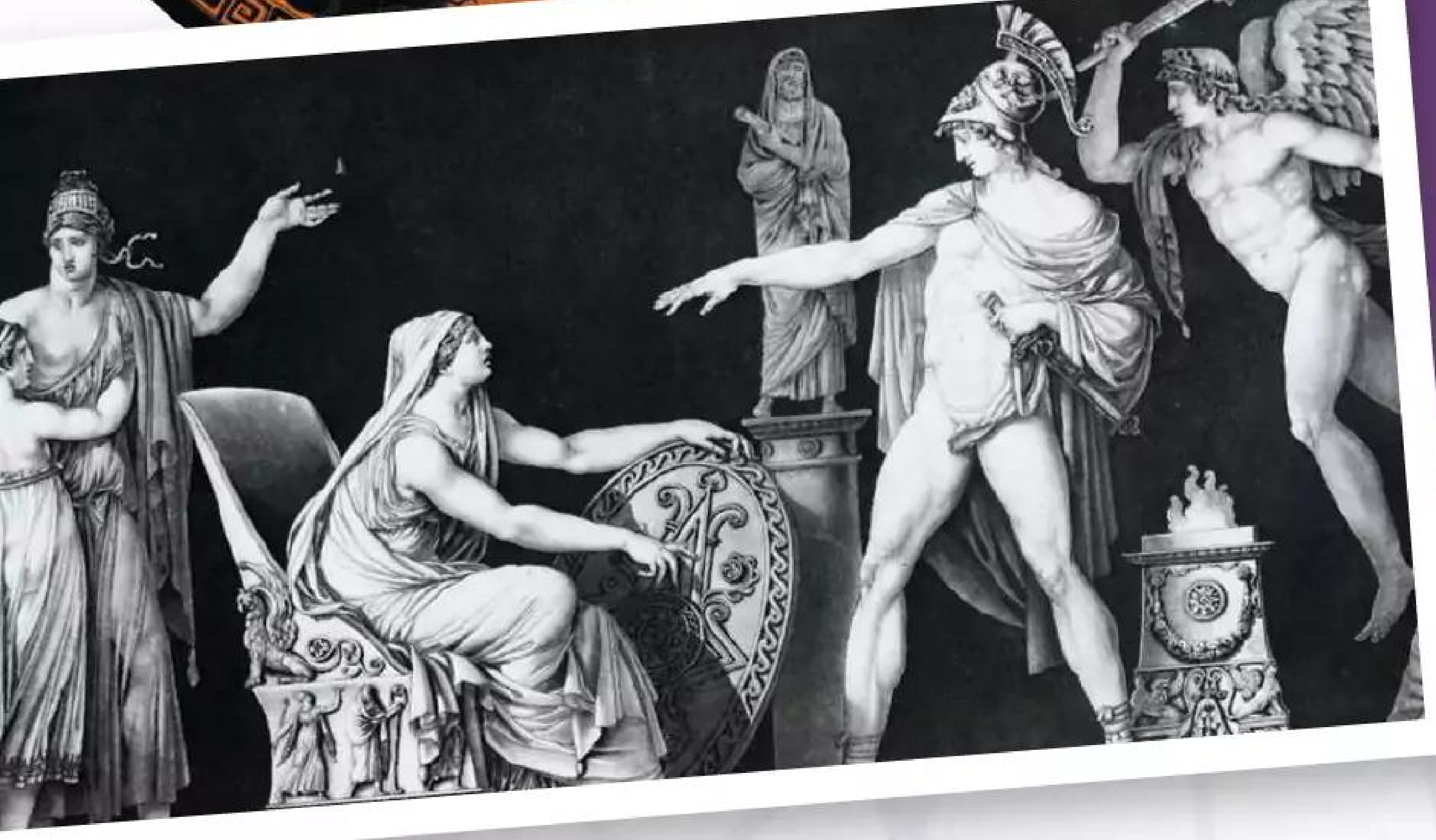
## MOTHERHOOD AND THE HOME

The lives of ancient Greek women were largely confined to the home. Men would serve the *polis* – state – while the domain of women was the *oikos* – the household. The women's quarters of a house, the *gynaikon*, were located on the upper floors, and wives were expected to bear and raise children and undertake domestic duties. Marriage itself would usually take place when a *kore* (maiden) was between 13 and 15 years old; only after the birth of her first child would she technically become a *gyne* (woman).

In ancient Greek society, the reputation of women was in all cases to be preserved. Athenian historian Thucydides, writing in the fifth century BC, famously asserted of women: "The greatest glory is to be least talked about among men, whether in praise or blame." This meant that many wealthy Athenian women were supervised and chaperoned by male relatives when outside, and in some cases not allowed to leave the house at all.

For Spartan women, however, life was different from their Athenian counterparts. They rarely married before the age of 20, while motherhood gave them enhanced status; raising future warriors was considered one of the most important roles in Spartan society. Women in Sparta (and in Delphi, Gortyn, Thessaly and Megara) could also own land, and because of military campaigns that took men away for long periods of time, they often had control of their own homes.





ABOVE LEFT: **Women are shown carding wool on a fifth-century BC drinking cup, now held in a Berlin museum**

LEFT: **Raising warriors was an important duty for Spartan women – here, a son leaves his mother to go to battle**

## WORK

Though life for Athenian women held many restrictions, religion provided a viable career path for those hailing from aristocratic backgrounds. In fact, the most senior religious office of the state – high priestess of the Athena Polias – was a female role. This, and other similar positions within Athens' religious cults, would have afforded the officeholders a certain degree of public influence, and in some cases, payment and property.

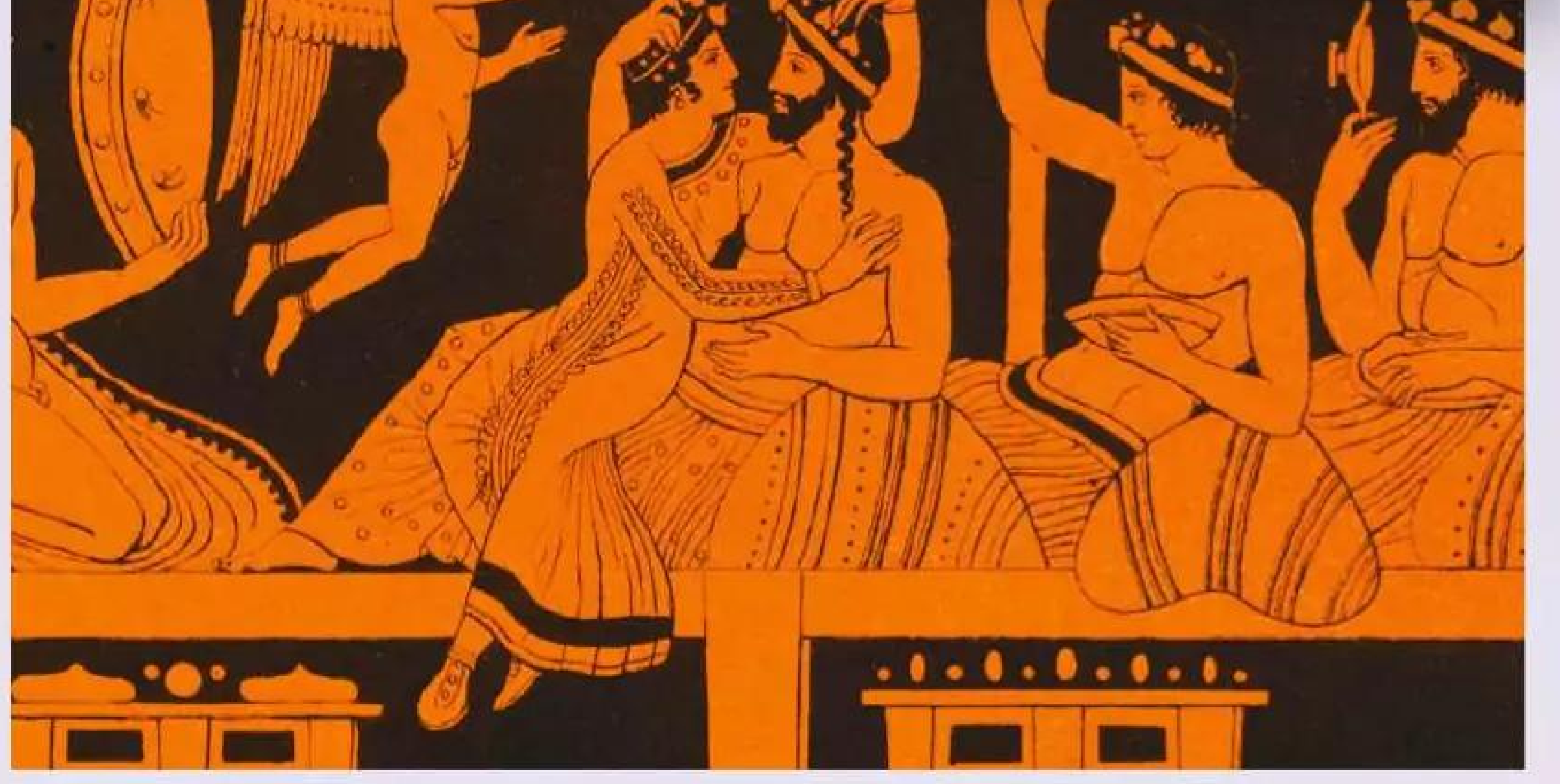
There is also the story of a pioneering Athenian midwife named Agnodice. According to legend, Agnodice – concerned at the high number of local women dying in childbirth – decided to disguise herself as a man and study medicine. According to some versions of the tale, the midwife would 'reveal' her true gender to patients in order to gain their trust, leading envious male doctors to accuse her of seducing pregnant women. While the existence of Agnodice is still debated by scholars, her legend has been used by women to support their role in medicine since the 17th century.

However, a more common – and certainly real – profession for many women of the time was that of sex worker. Of these, it's known that there were two particular groups of workers, called *hetairai* and *pornai*. A *hetaira* would have been able to read and write, and been employed to work for the higher classes in society. They would have also served as a companion – perhaps more comparable to the role of a geisha in Japanese culture.

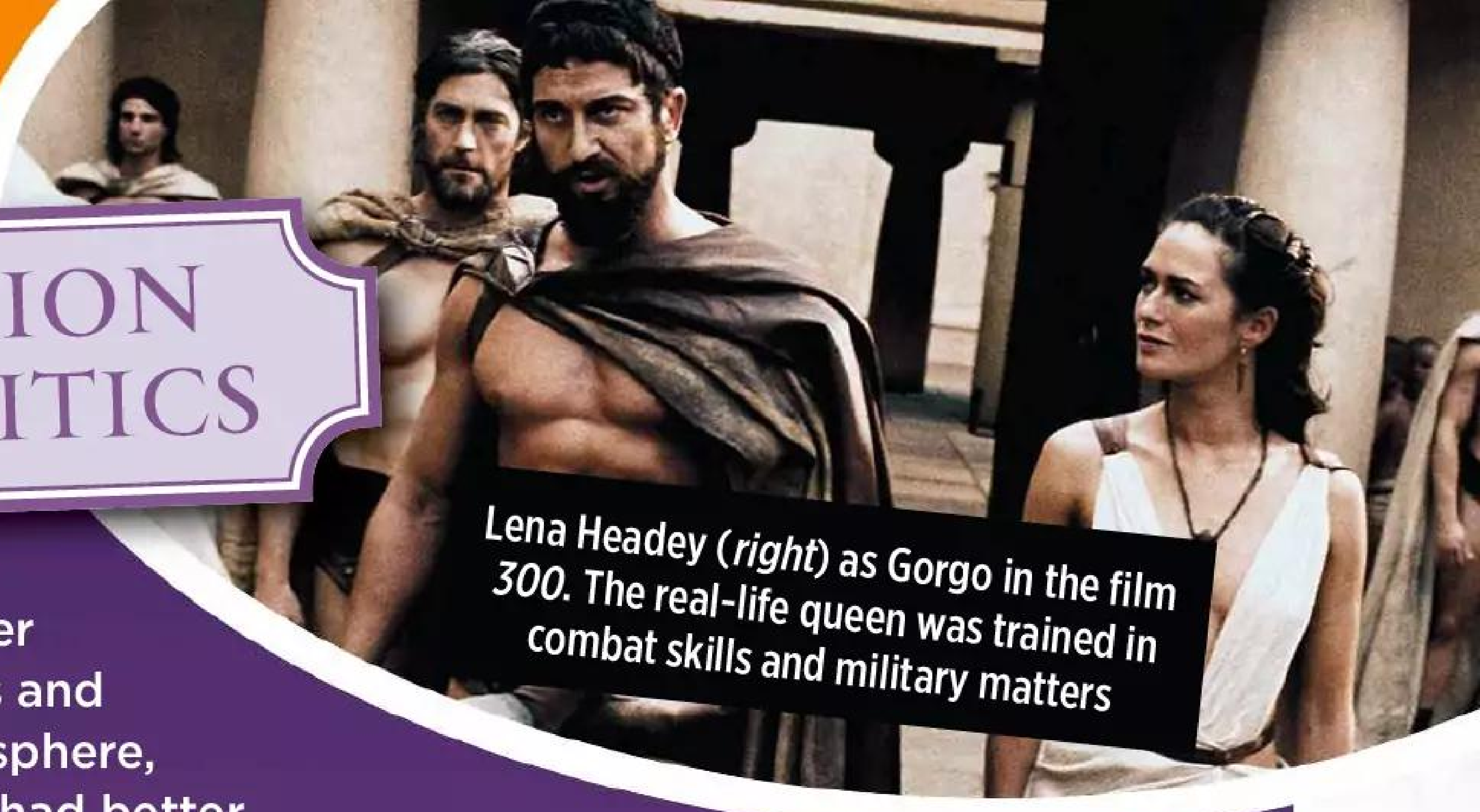
Meanwhile, *pornai* (from which we get the modern word 'pornography') would have spent their time working in a brothel and were expected to serve all levels of the city's men, from the elite to members of the lower classes.

RIGHT: **A fifth-century BC relief depicts a goddess, mother and nurse with a newborn infant. The artwork may have been offered to a healing deity as thanks for ensuring the safe delivery of a woman's child**

BELOW: **A Greek illustration shows a man enjoying the company of a courtesan a courtesan**



## EDUCATION AND POLITICS



Lena Headey (*right*) as Gorgo in the film *300*. The real-life queen was trained in combat skills and military matters

Much like their greater freedoms as mothers and within the domestic sphere, Spartan women also had better access to education than their counterparts in other Greek city-states. While their early education would have taken place at home rather than in a school, women were seen as a key part of Spartan society and allowed to make business transactions. One famous example of the greater opportunities available to Spartan women (albeit noble women) concerns the fifth-century BC Spartan queen, Gorgo. The only known child of Cleomenes I, king of Sparta, Gorgo (who later married King Leonidas I) was schooled in literature, culture and physical education – the latter of which included wrestling and combat skills. Indeed, Gorgo was noted by fifth-century BC Greek historian Herodotus as a woman of great wisdom; she advised her father on military matters, and is sometimes credited as being one of history's first cryptanalysts.

For Athenian women, however, there was no such freedom to participate in their city-state's political and social life. Even if they were educated in some manner of business dealings, they could not by law enter into any contract beyond the value of one *medimnos* of barley – a small amount that ensured any transaction was restricted to domestic purchases.

And while Athens is lauded as the birthplace of democracy, Athenian women were never true 'adults' in the eyes of the law. This inequality had long echoes into the 20th century; women in modern Greece didn't have the unconditional opportunity to vote until 1952.

### DID YOU KNOW?

**DEADLY DELIVERY**

As well as being the ancient Greek goddess of hunting and wild animals, Artemis was also a deity of childbirth. If a woman died during labour, it was said she had been struck by one of Artemis' silver arrows – which were apparently painless.

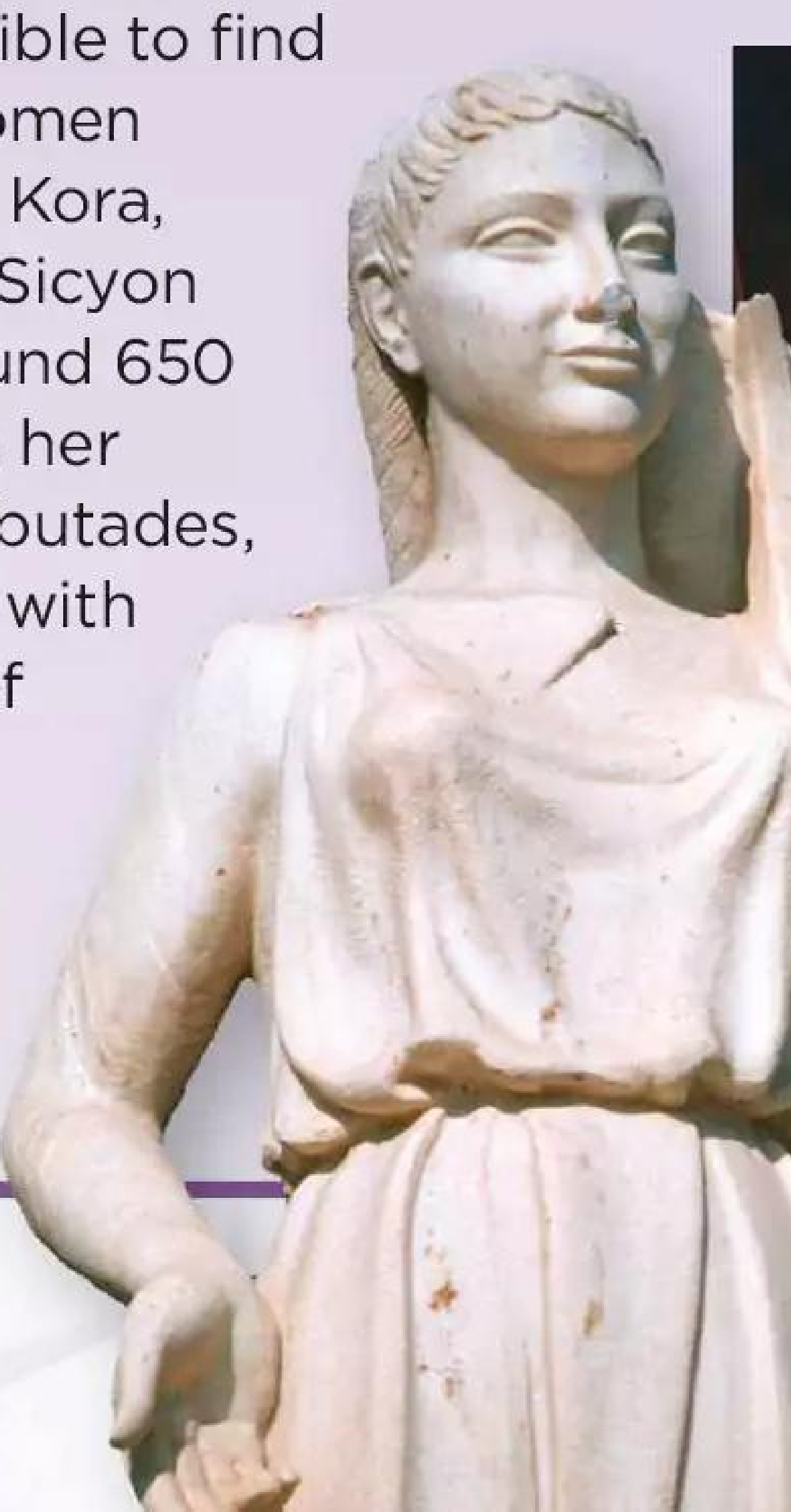
## ARTS AND CULTURE

While women were generally excluded from the arts, one of ancient Greece's most celebrated poets was a woman named Sappho. Born in either Eressos or Mytilene on the island of Lesbos, likely to a wealthy family (given that she could read and write), Sappho's lyrics and poetry were remarkable for their candid depictions of passion and sexuality – particularly between women. The seventh-century BC poet was even dubbed by Plato as the "Tenth Muse", and honoured on ancient coins.

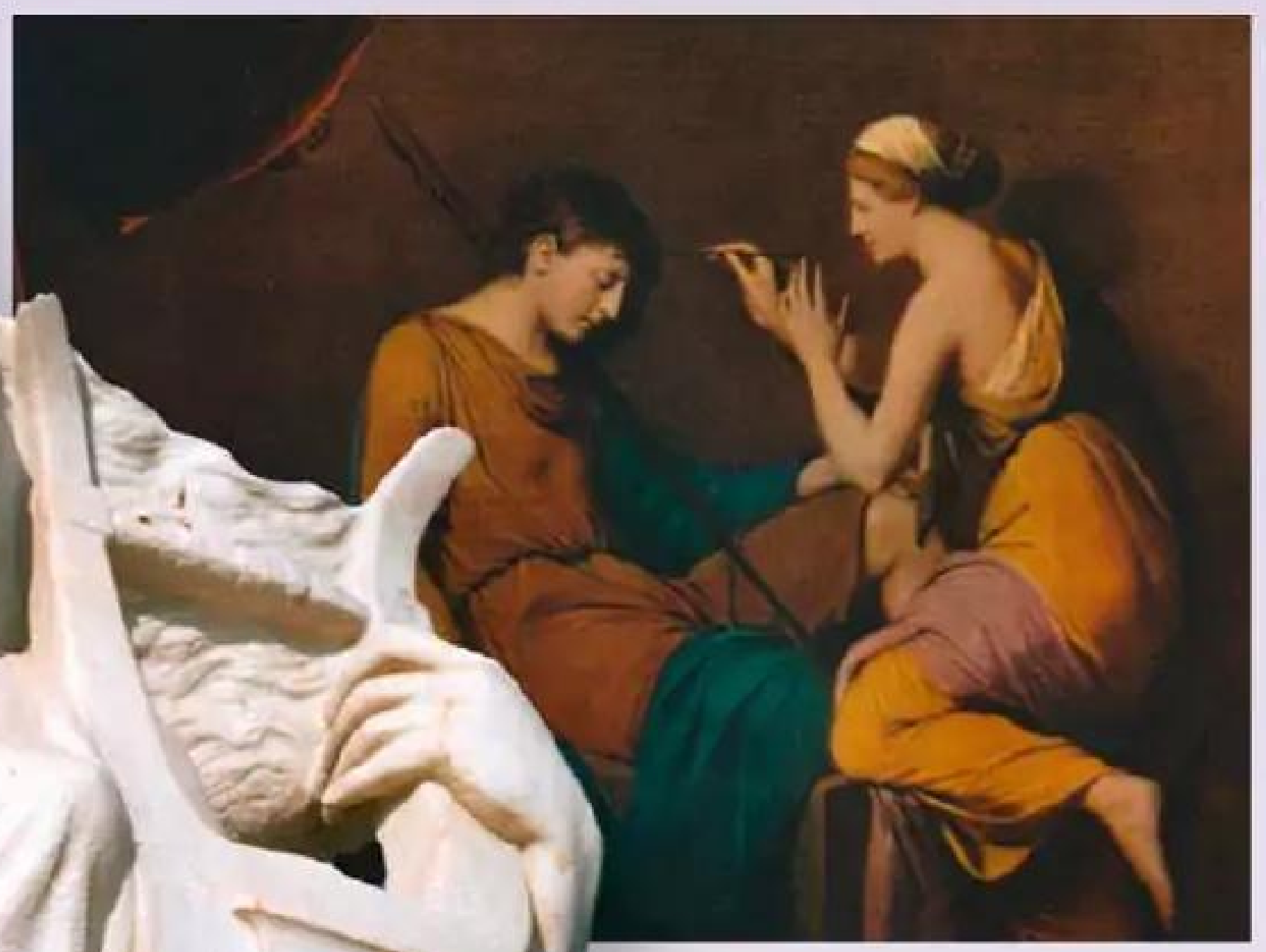
It's also possible to find evidence of women artists, such as Kora, who was from Sicyon and active around 650 BC. Along with her artist father, Dibutades, she is credited with the invention of relief modelling. According to a popular tale, Kora fell in love with one of her father's apprentices, and traced the outline of his face in charcoal on a wall. Dibutades later filled the outline in clay, creating the first relief.

Another example of a woman who broke the mould was the fifth-century BC artist Timarete, who, according to the Roman author Pliny the Elder, "scorned the duties of women and practised her father's art". ⊙

**WORDS: ELINOR EVANS**



A statue of the poet Sappho stands on her native island of Lesbos



Kora apparently traced the outline of her lover's face on a wall as he slept

# WHO'S WHO IN ANCIENT GREECE?

Get to know some of the civilisation's most influential people

## SOLON

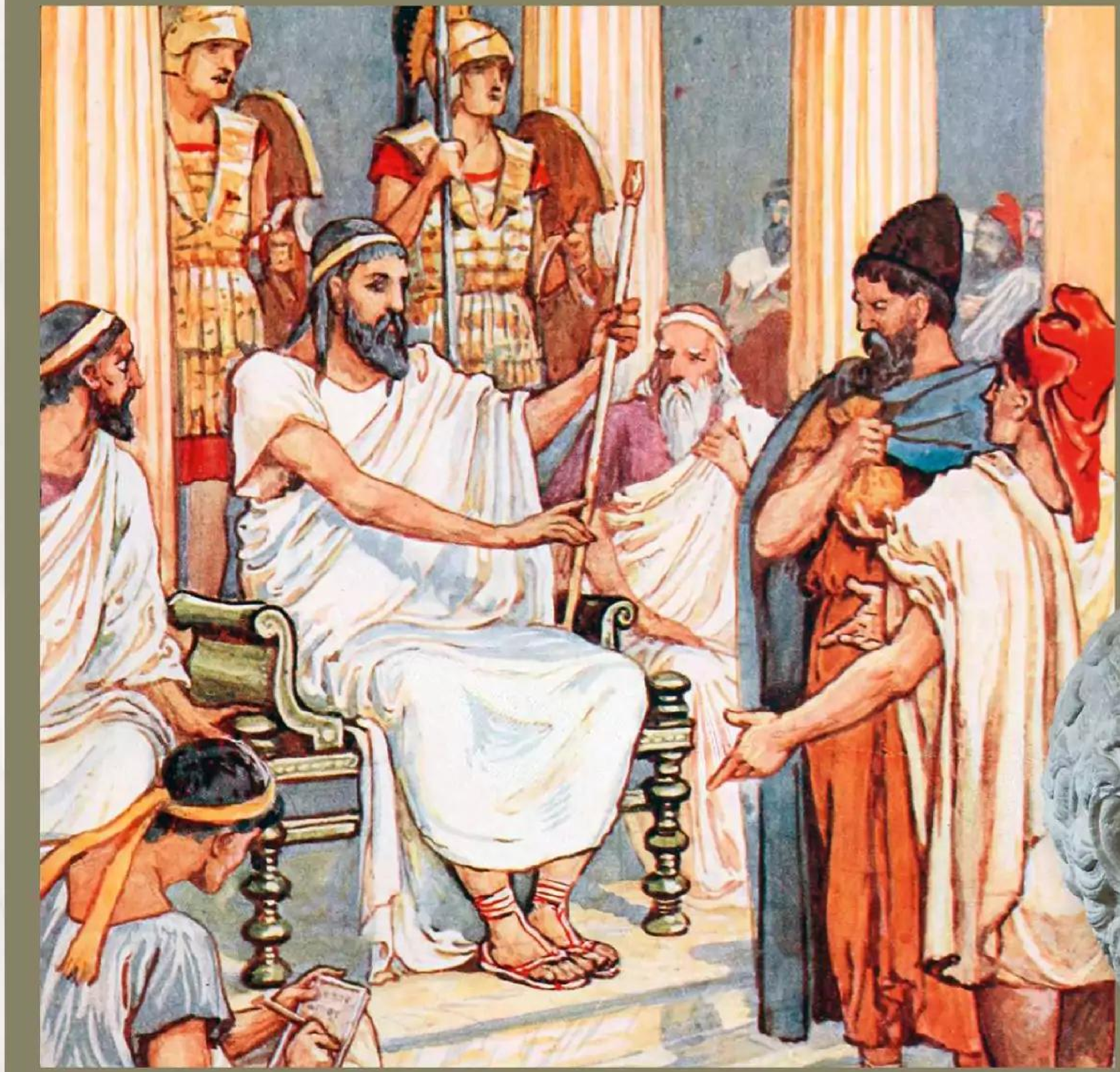
c630–c560 BC

One of the innovations the ancient Greeks are most famed for is democracy – a political system of ruling by the people as opposed to by a monarch or dictator – and its grandfather is considered to be the Athenian magistrate Solon.

Born in the late seventh century BC, Solon was chosen to become a governor or *archon* of Athens. Through his economic reforms, he freed those who had been forced into debt-slavery for not being able to pay their creditors, and encouraged people to take up trades to avoid poverty.

Thanks to Solon, all Athenian male citizens could also attend the general assembly for the first time, and rule was taken from being solely in the hands of the city-state's aristocratic families.

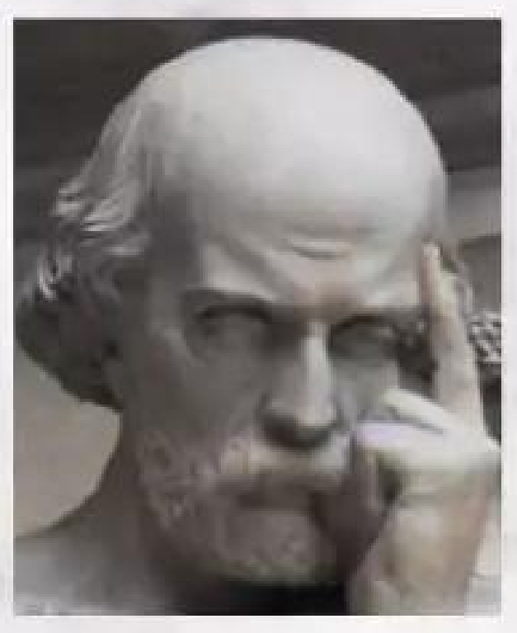
Many of the lawmaker's reforms failed initially, as Athens was temporarily ruled by the tyrant Peisistratos a few years after Solon left the city. His efforts, however, would lay the foundations for the reforms brought in by Cleisthenes a few decades later, which formally established democracy in Athens.



Solon was a statesman, lawmaker and poet, and is often credited with having laid the foundations for Athenian democracy

GETTY IMAGES X7, ALAMY X3

## HIPPOCRATES c460–c375 BC



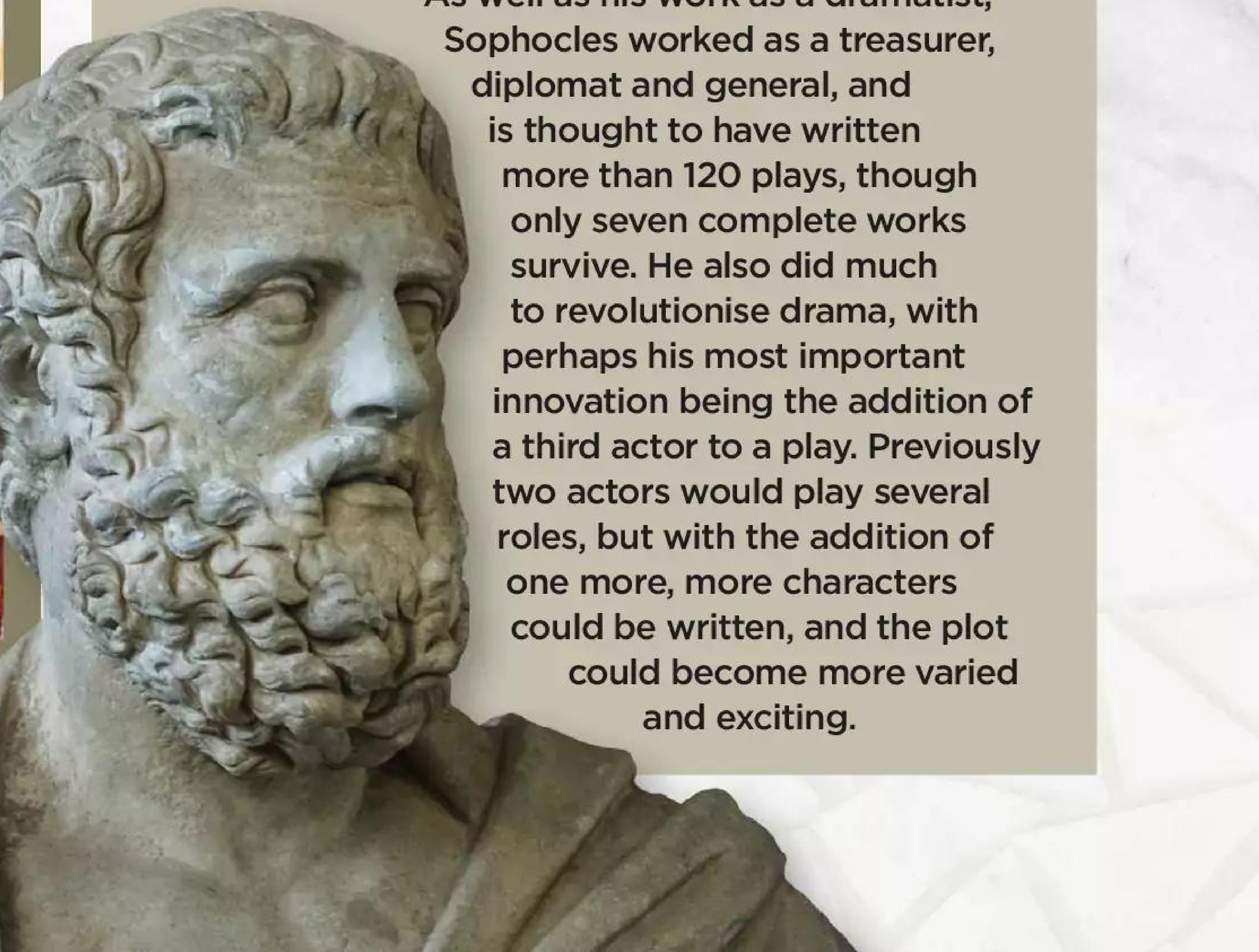
Unusually for the ancient world, physician and philosopher Hippocrates believed that illnesses had rational rather than supernatural explanations. At the time, the gods and magical curses were often blamed for causing disease. Instead, Hippocrates' pupils were encouraged to observe their patients, note their symptoms, and analyse how their illnesses progressed. He established medicine as a formal profession, and the Hippocratic Oath – a code of conduct for doctors – still inspires the one taken by physicians around the world today. He was also a believer in exercising and eating a healthy diet as a way of preventing and treating disease. The work of Hippocrates later inspired the physician Galen (AD 129–c210), and the ideas of both men were treated as fact until the late medieval period.

## SOPHOCLES

c496–406 BC

As much as we love a laugh when we go to the theatre, there's something about a tragic story that appeals and pulls at the heartstrings, and we have the Athenians to thank for the genre of tragedy. Watching a play in ancient Greece was a favourite pastime, and festivals held to honour the god Dionysus saw three dramatic genres emerge: tragedy, comedy and satyr drama (the latter combining both). The works of Sophocles are some of the earliest-surviving tragic plays, and include *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*.

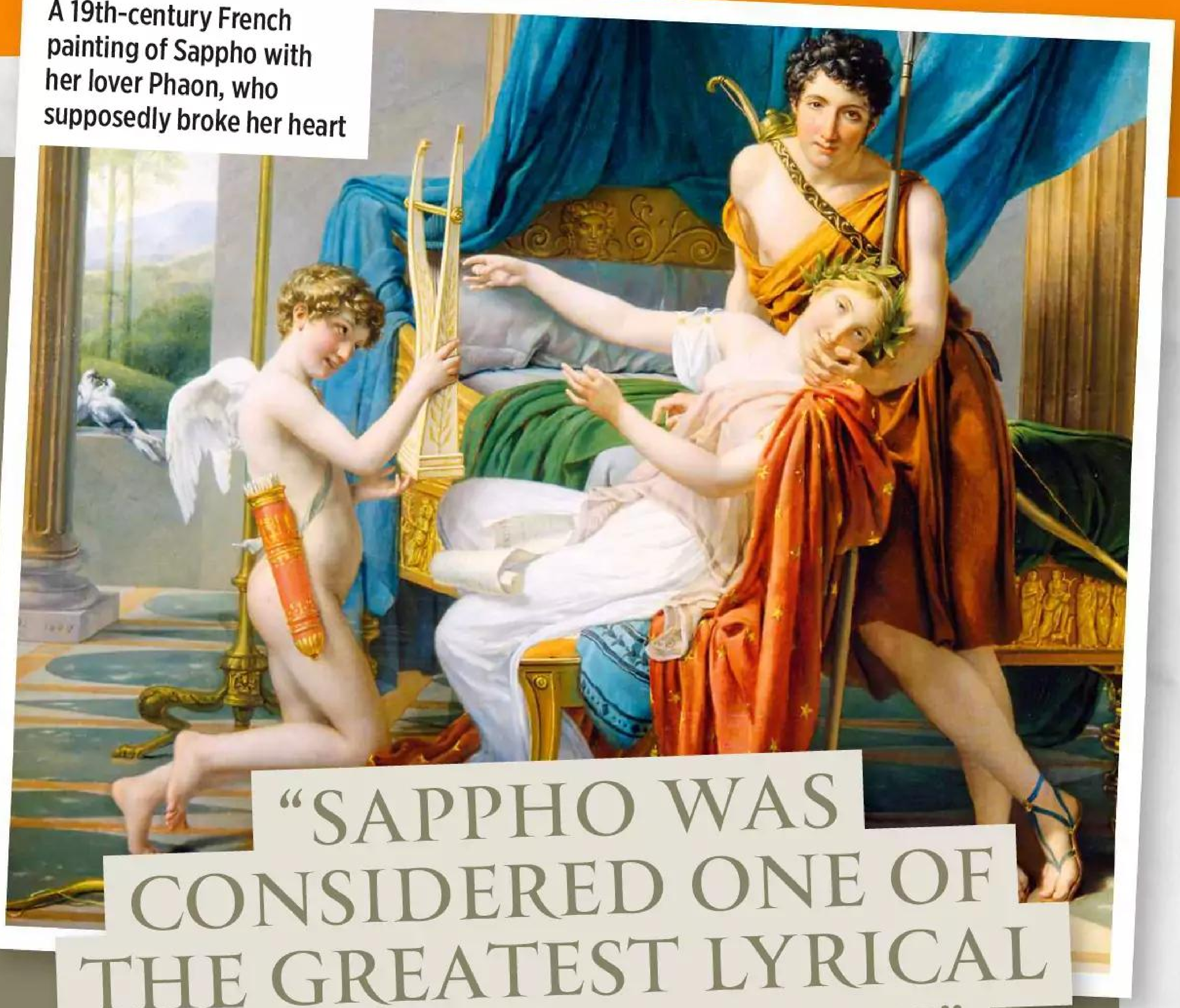
Born just outside Athens in the early fifth century BC, Sophocles' talents first came to prominence when he won first prize for tragedy in the Dionysian festival, beating the Athenian king of drama, Aeschylus. As well as his work as a dramatist, Sophocles worked as a treasurer, diplomat and general, and is thought to have written more than 120 plays, though only seven complete works survive. He also did much to revolutionise drama, with perhaps his most important innovation being the addition of a third actor to a play. Previously two actors would play several roles, but with the addition of one more, more characters could be written, and the plot could become more varied and exciting.



## SAPPHO

c630–570 BC

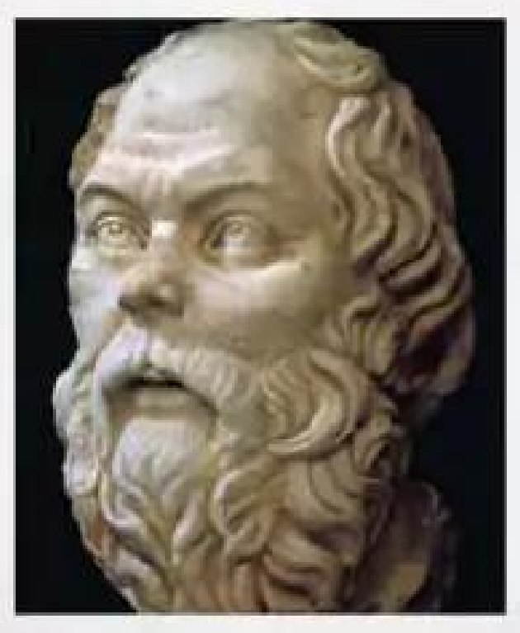
**Thought to have been born in the late seventh century BC on the island of Lesbos, poet Sappho was from an aristocratic family. On Lesbos, she ran an academy for young unmarried women devoted to Eros and Aphrodite – the god and goddess of love. Sappho was considered one of the greatest lyric poets of her day and mainly wrote on the themes of love, family and friendship. While some say she died of old age, other stories claim that she threw herself off a cliff after having her heart broken. Three centuries after her death, Sappho became the source of parody and was characterised as a promiscuous homosexual – the term 'lesbian' is derived from the island where she was born and 'sapphic' refers to love between women, as well as the four-line form that Sappho's poetry usually took. There is little concrete evidence about her true sexuality, though, and she wrote as passionately about men as she did women.**



A 19th-century French painting of Sappho with her lover Phaon, who supposedly broke her heart

> "SAPPHO WAS CONSIDERED ONE OF THE GREATEST LYRICAL POETS OF HER DAY"

### SOCRATES c470–399 BC



We only know the ideas of Socrates – the founding father of western philosophy – thanks to his pupil, Plato: Socrates didn't write anything down, but luckily Plato did. Before pursuing philosophy, Socrates fought in the Peloponnesian War and worked as a stonemason. His philosophical ideas were extremely radical for the time – he believed that people should focus on their behaviour and morality rather than wealth and power. Although he attracted many scholars to his discussions, Socrates wasn't widely liked in Athens and was an outspoken opponent of democracy. In 399 BC, he was sentenced to death after being charged with corrupting the city's youth and disrespecting the gods.

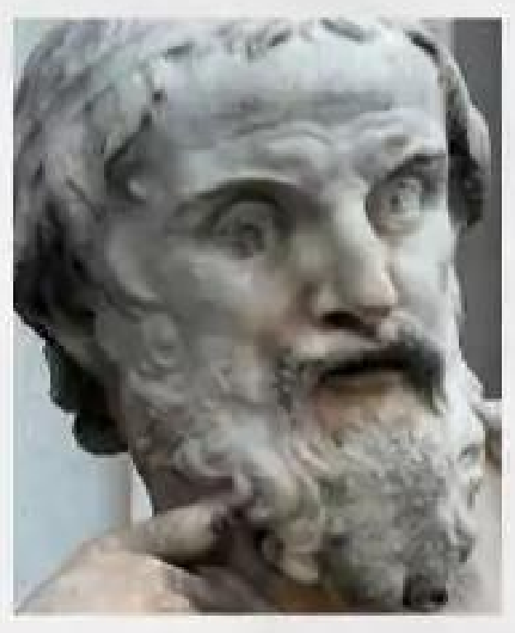
### PYTHAGORAS c570–c495 BC

To the ire of many students, the theories of mathematician Pythagoras are still taught today. We have little concrete knowledge about his life, though it's thought he was born in Samos in the early-sixth century BC. After travelling, Pythagoras settled in Italy where he formed a secret group of students who lived by a philosophy based around mathematics – appropriately known as the Pythagoreans. He is credited with discovering the functional significance of numbers, as well as the Pythagoras theorem, used to calculate the length of the sides in a right-angled triangle.

### PERICLES c495–429 BC

General and statesmen Pericles oversaw Athens during its golden age and was so well respected that he was lauded as the city's 'first citizen'. He led Athens during the first few years of the Peloponnesian War and expanded the Delian League – a group of Greek states – into an empire. A lover of the arts and literature, his ambitious building programme, which included the Acropolis, helped Athens become the cultural and educational centre of the ancient world. He succumbed to the Plague of Athens in 429 BC.

### HERODOTUS c484–c425 BC



Without Herodotus, we might not know as much as we do about the events of ancient Greece. He's believed to have hailed from Halicarnassus, a Greek city that was under Persian rule at his birth in the early fifth century. In around 425 BC, he published *The Histories* – an account of the Greco-Persian Wars. This was the first time that a writer had attempted to explain the cause of an event, or study it in such detail – and so historical analysis was born. Herodotus' work was based on his travels across the Persian and Greek territories and the stories he collected on the way. What we know about the battle of Marathon is all thanks to Herodotus. Other writers criticised his weaving of fiction into his narratives, but he is widely considered the first true historian.

## ALEXANDER THE GREAT

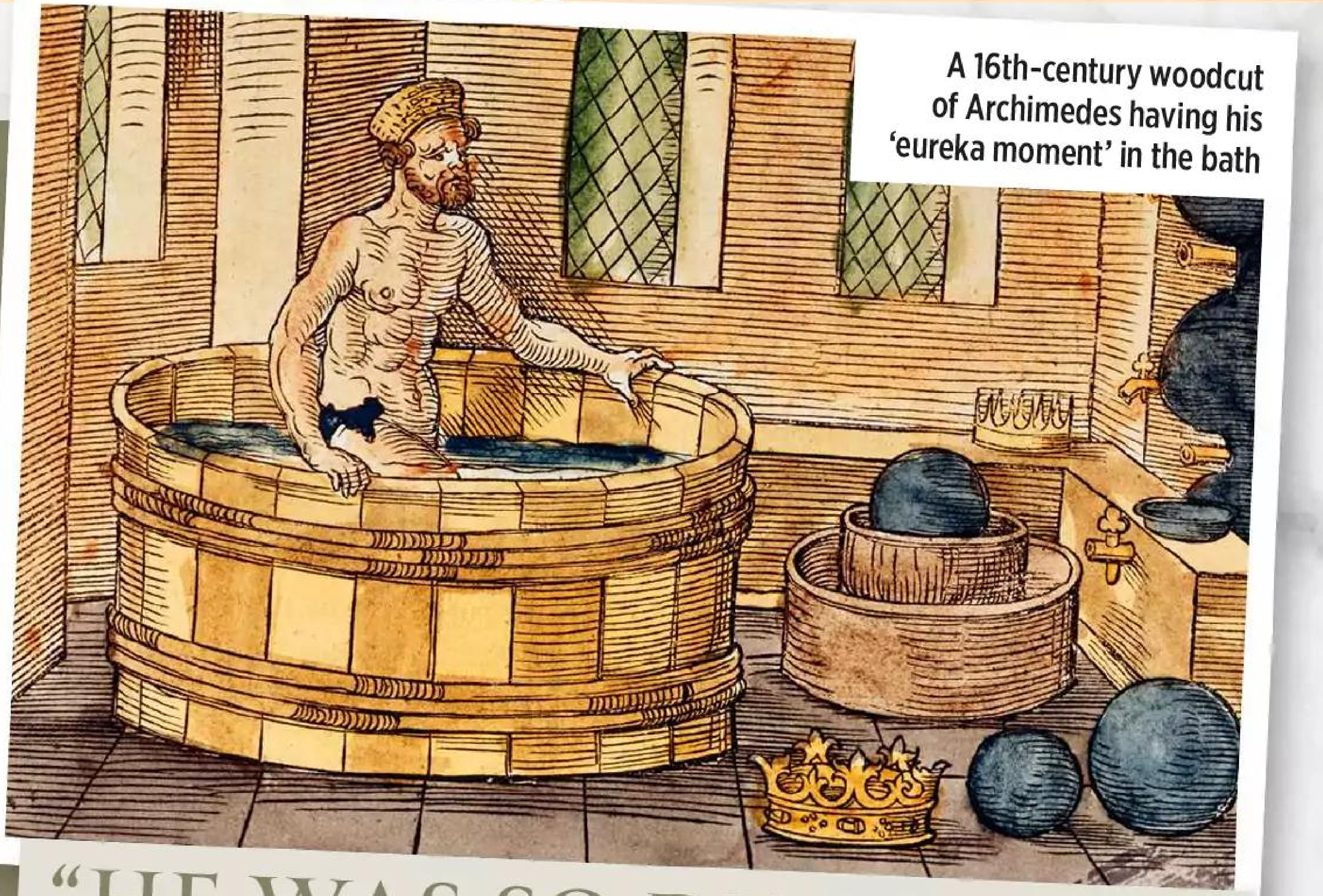
356–323 BC

**Despite his short rule, Alexander the Great transformed the ancient world in just over a decade. In 336 BC, after the assassination of his father, Alexander ascended the Macedonian throne at the age of 20; educated by the great philosopher Aristotle, he was an adept leader and strategist. Under his rule, Macedonia continued asserting its power within Greece. Even more impressively, Alexander conquered territories that were formerly part of the Persian empire without losing a single major battle, including Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt. At 25, he was leader of Greece, pharaoh of Egypt and overlord of Asia Minor, and for the next decade he consolidated his sprawling empire, which spanned three continents. His death at the age of 32 saw his empire broken up, and many historians have since questioned how much more he could have achieved had he lived longer. Today he is still considered one of history's greatest military commanders.**

# ARCHIMEDES

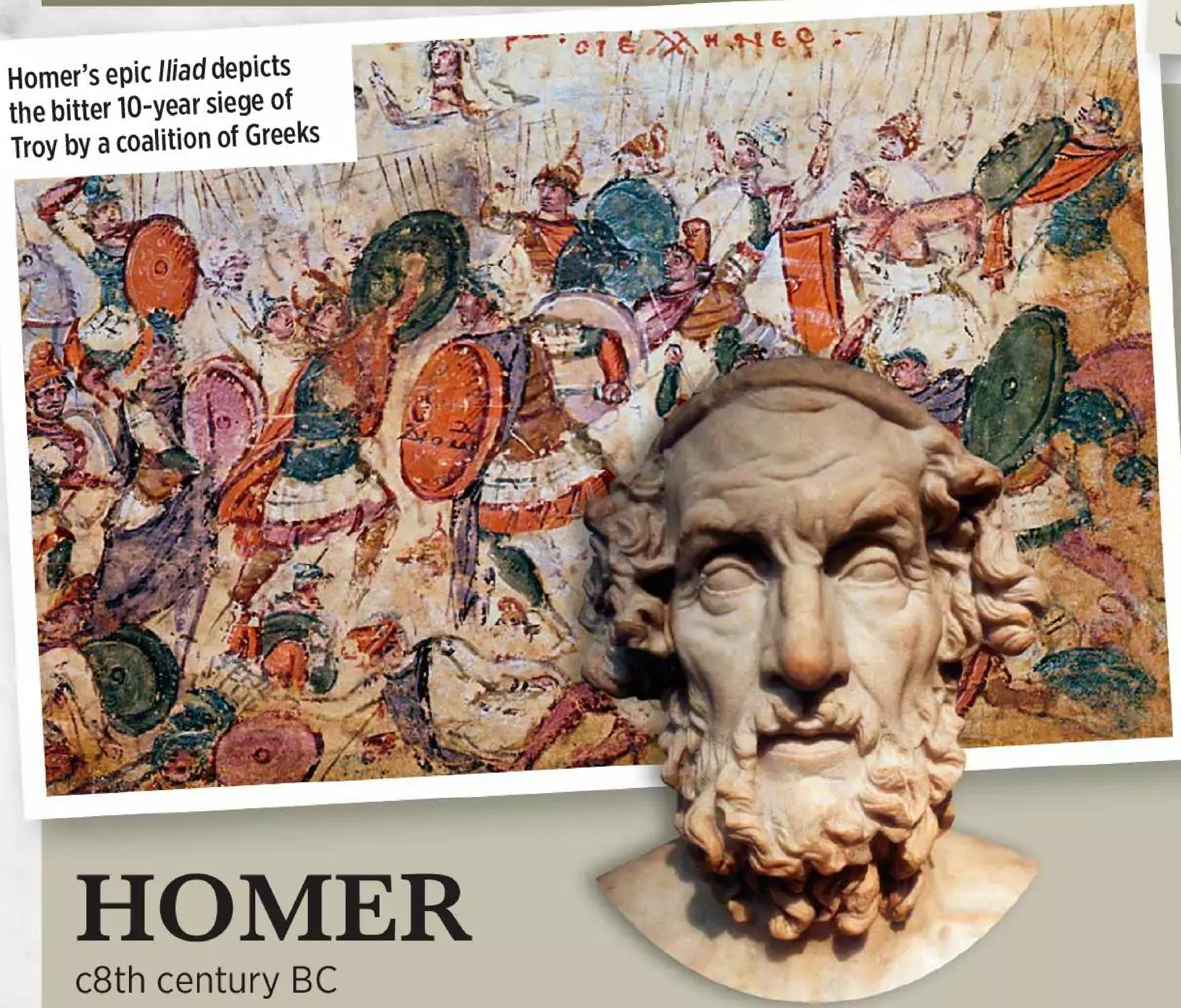
c287–212 BC

If you've ever had a brilliant idea and shouted "Eureka!", you have Greek scientist and inventor Archimedes to thank for that. According to an anecdotal story, Archimedes allegedly discovered that the amount of water displaced when he entered his bathtub was equal to the amount of upward force put on the body. He was so delighted that he apparently ran down the street naked, shouting "Eureka!" – Greek for "I have found it!". Whether or not the story is true, Archimedes, who hailed from Syracuse in Sicily, is one of ancient Greece's most famous scientists, inventors and mathematicians. He discovered the law of hydrostatics, the principles of the lever and created siege engines. It's thought that he even designed machines that could lift ships out of the water, and found an accurate approximation of pi – the ratio of the circumference of any circle to the diameter of that circle. Despite this, Archimedes' mathematical writings were little known in his own time – it wasn't until the sixth century AD that they gained a wide readership.



A 16th-century woodcut of Archimedes having his 'eureka moment' in the bath

> "HE WAS SO DELIGHTED THAT HE APPARENTLY RAN DOWN THE STREET SHOUTING 'EUREKA!'"



Homer's epic *Iliad* depicts the bitter 10-year siege of Troy by a coalition of Greeks

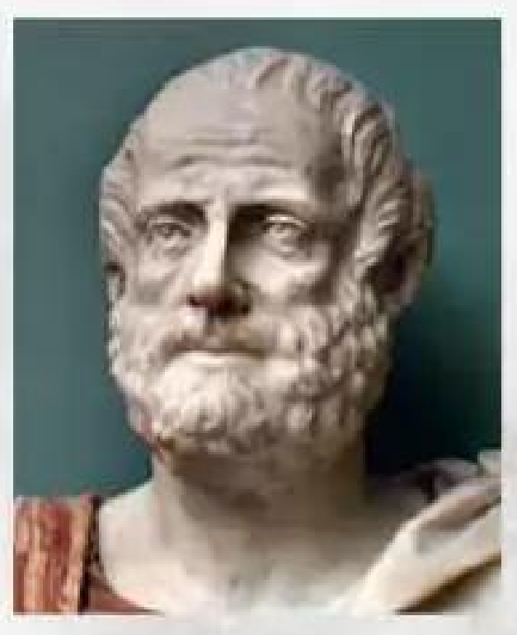
# HOMER

c8th century BC

If you were to take an epic journey or voyage – physical or spiritual – some may describe it as an odyssey. The use of this term goes all the way back to a poem written during the early days of the ancient Greeks. Few concrete facts are known about the life of Homer, but legends claim he was a blind bard from the island of Chios and that his poems would have been spread orally before being written down. His work is presumed to include the *Iliad* – one of the most important sources about the legendary Trojan War – and the *Odyssey* – an account of the epic journey taken by Odysseus after the fall of Troy.

The works were the foundation of ancient Greek literature and are still considered some of the most important in the western canon. There is some debate over exactly who wrote the poems attributed to Homer, but experts agree they were written around the late eighth to early seventh century BC. Whether Homer did write them or not, the epics shaped Greek culture, highlighted popular values of the time (such as honour and courage), and remain some of the oldest surviving works of literature still widely read today.

## ARISTOTLE 384–322 BC



Philosopher and polymath Aristotle came from a tradition of great thinkers – he was a pupil of Plato who was himself a student of Socrates. Aristotle founded a school of philosophy at the Lyceum in Athens and was considered influential enough to be the teacher of the young Alexander the Great. Aristotle's writings were some of the first to create a system of western philosophy that included logic, science, morality, politics and metaphysics. He heavily influenced Christian theology, as well as medieval Islamic and Jewish traditions, and his work is still studied and analysed today.

## PHEIDIAS c480–430 BC

Pheidias was one of the most famous artists of the ancient world whose greatest works have unfortunately not stood the test of time. Little of his life is known, but he worked mainly in Athens before creating a workshop at Olympia. Here, he created his greatest masterpiece – a gold and ivory seated statue of Zeus that became one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. He also created three monuments to Athena, as well the Parthenon carvings – these survive today, and those in the British Museum are known as the Elgin Marbles. Pheidias' later years took a dramatic turn when he was thrown in prison after being accused of embezzling gold intended for a statue of Athena; it's thought he died while incarcerated.

## ANYTE OF TEGEA c3rd century BC

Anyte was so celebrated as a poet in the third century BC that she was widely known as the female Homer. Born in Arcadia in the Peloponnese, she stood out from the crowd as one of the first poets to focus on the natural world rather than the gods or the supernatural. Ancient Greek poets were often commissioned to write epitaphs and epigrams to celebrate battle victories and heroes, but Anyte instead memorialised loved ones and favourite pets. More of her work survives than any other ancient Greek female writer, except for Sappho. ⊙

**WORDS: EMMA SLATTERY WILLIAMS**

GETTY IMAGES X4, ALAMY X2

# ARMED AND DANGEROUS

Greek city-states are famed for their cultural expression, but the grim reality was that none could thrive without mastering the art of war

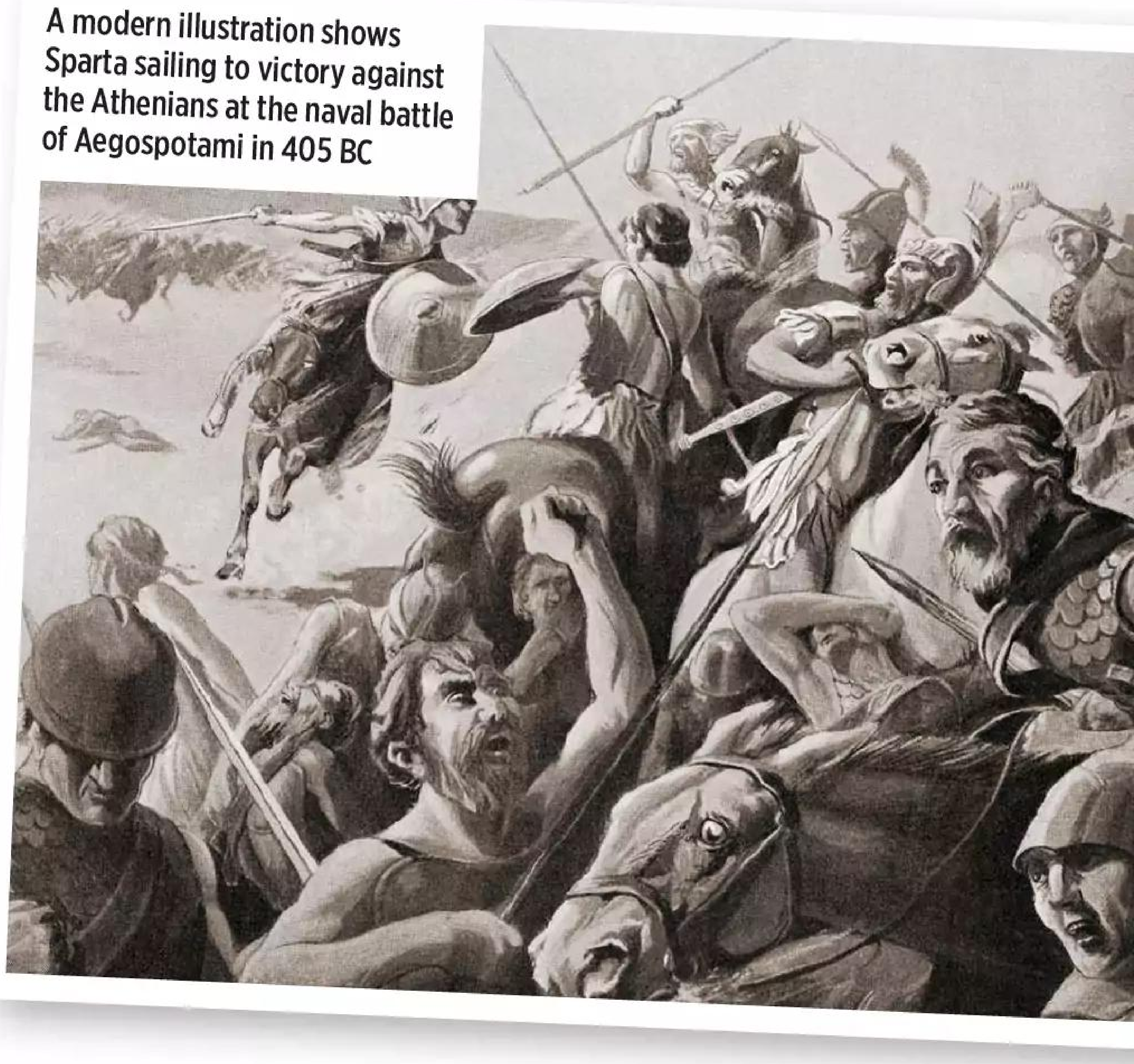
Classical Greece (c480–323 BC) is chiefly remembered for its poetry, statues and extraordinary works of architecture such as the Parthenon. Yet for all the energy the ancient Greeks expended on forging art for the ages, they also dedicated a great deal to mastering the art of war.

One of the main reasons for this was competition. In the fifth and fourth centuries BC, Greece wasn't a single country like it is today. It was made up of lots of smaller city-states (from Athens to Sparta, Corinth to Thebes), all competing for finite land or resources. Such rivalries were often resolved at the point of a sword. Then there was Persia. This regional superpower attempted to conquer Greece more than once.

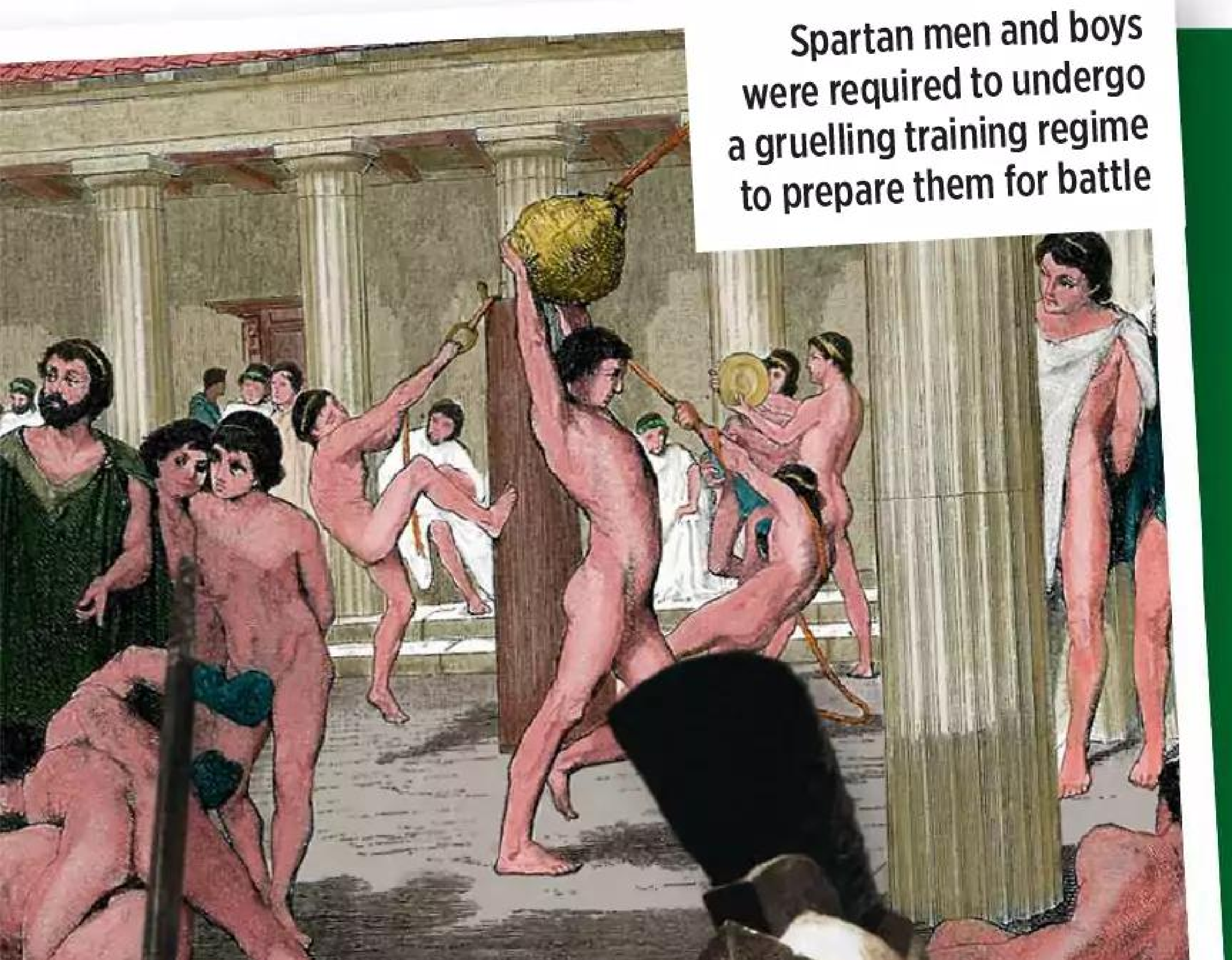
The resulting conflicts produced some of the most celebrated clashes in history – the Athenians' victory over the Persians at Marathon (which, prior to the battle, reputedly saw Pheidippides run 150 miles from Athens to request help from the Spartans), and Lysander's brilliant naval triumph over Athens to end the Peloponnesian War, to name just two.

Just as Classical Greece saw enormous leaps forward in politics and culture, so it also witnessed advances in military technologies. These included the *trireme*, the galley that helped Athens rule the waves in the fifth century BC, and the fearsome Macedonian *phalanx*.

By the end of the Classical period, Alexander the Great was using these advances to turn the tables on the Persians and forge an enormous empire. Greek warfare would now be exported across the known world – with history-shaping consequences.



A modern illustration shows Sparta sailing to victory against the Athenians at the naval battle of Aegospotami in 405 BC



Spartan men and boys were required to undergo a gruelling training regime to prepare them for battle

Gerard Butler as Sparta's King Leonidas in the blood-soaked war epic *300*

## SPARTA'S WAR MACHINE

### Ancient Greece's warrior-society produced skilled and fearless fighters

All Greek city-states took their military seriously. But only one lived and breathed martial prowess, and that was Sparta. Sparta was a true warrior-society, as men discovered at the earliest of ages. At the tender age of seven, boys were plucked from their families and entered into a 23-year military training regime designed to turn them into consummate warriors.

From the outset, the trainee fighters were taught that loyalty to their city should always take precedence over self-preservation. This mantra was reflected in the austere nature of their training: they were subjected to continuous (often violent) competitions, given meagre food rations, and encouraged to steal food in order to prepare themselves for life in a warzone. Worse still, they were often encouraged to mistreat the helots, Sparta's slave class.

Women, too, bought into the warrior ethos. They were expected to keep physically fit, while mothers reportedly told their sons before they left for battle, "Come back with your shield, or on it."

This unstinting dedication to war made the Spartans feared opponents, famed for their bravery. Such courage earned them a place in history: 300 Spartans were famously among those who fought against a massive Persian army at Thermopylae (*see page 84*).

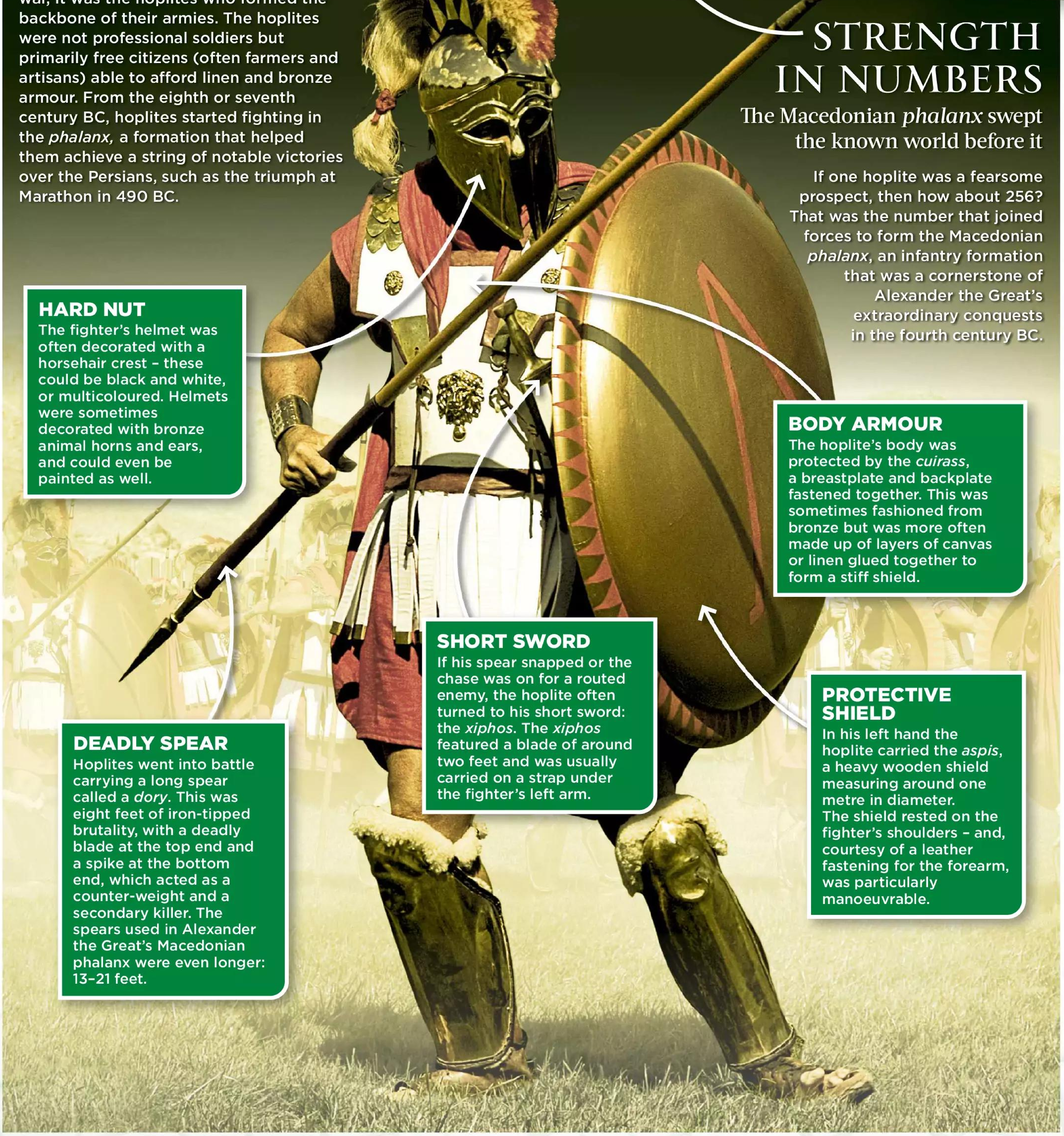
In 404 BC, the Spartans used their martial prowess to unseat Athens as the dominant power in the Greek world at the climax of the Peloponnesian War (*see page 73*). Just over 30 years later, the Thebans invaded the region of Laconia and freed many of the helots. For all their military acumen, the Spartans' spell at the top table of Greek powers was to be short-lived.

GETTY IMAGES X2, ALAMY X2

# HOPLITE FIGHTER

A guide to the footsoldiers of ancient Greek armies

When the Greek city-states went to war, it was the hoplites who formed the backbone of their armies. The hoplites were not professional soldiers but primarily free citizens (often farmers and artisans) able to afford linen and bronze armour. From the eighth or seventh century BC, hoplites started fighting in the *phalanx,* a formation that helped them achieve a string of notable victories over the Persians, such as the triumph at Marathon in 490 BC.



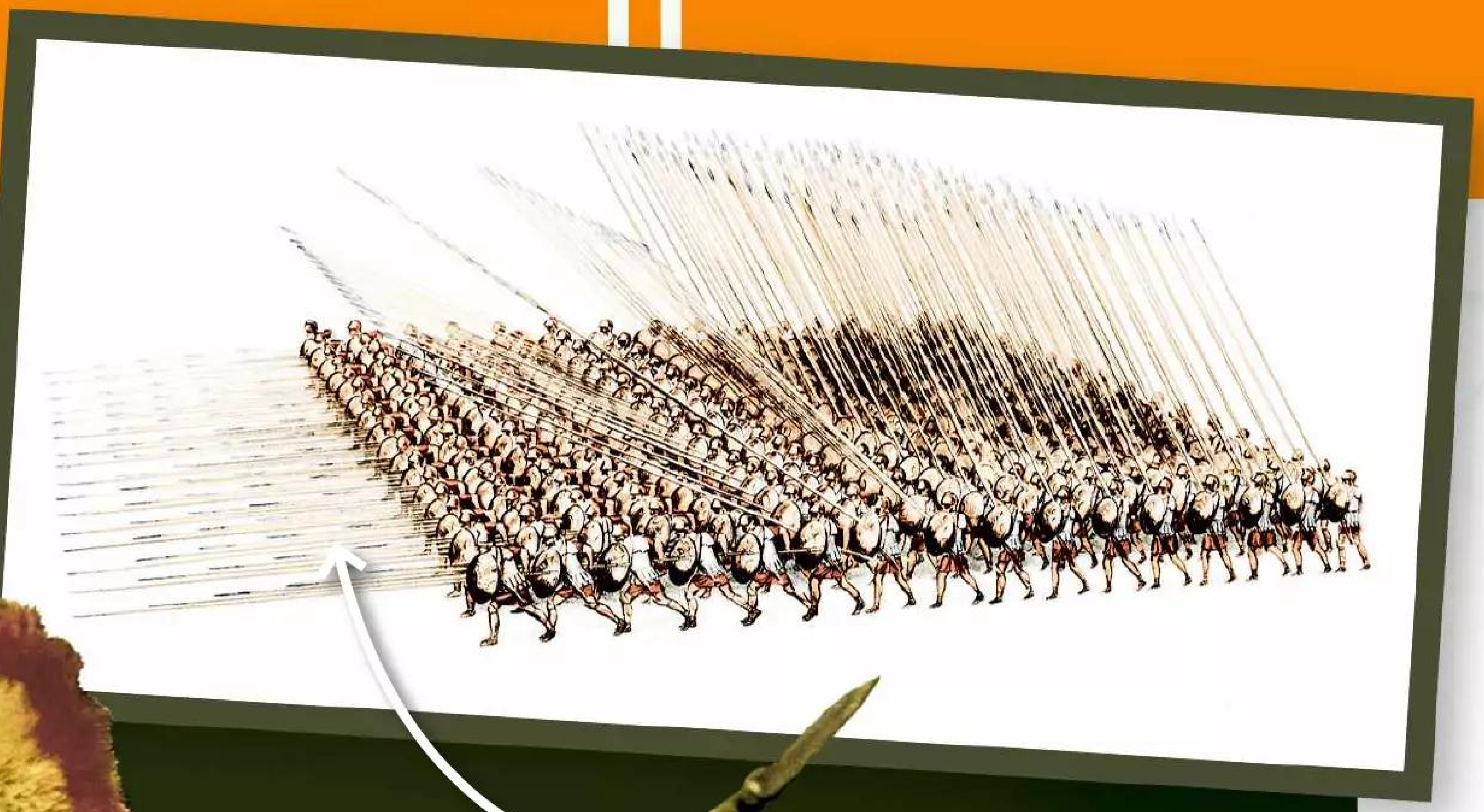
**HARD NUT**
The fighter's helmet was often decorated with a horsehair crest – these could be black and white, or multicoloured. Helmets were sometimes decorated with bronze animal horns and ears, and could even be painted as well.

**BODY ARMOUR**
The hoplite's body was protected by the *cuirass*, a breastplate and backplate fastened together. This was sometimes fashioned from bronze but was more often made up of layers of canvas or linen glued together to form a stiff shield.

**SHORT SWORD**
If his spear snapped or the chase was on for a routed enemy, the hoplite often turned to his short sword: the *xiphos*. The *xiphos* featured a blade of around two feet and was usually carried on a strap under the fighter's left arm.

**PROTECTIVE SHIELD**
In his left hand the hoplite carried the *aspis*, a heavy wooden shield measuring around one metre in diameter. The shield rested on the fighter's shoulders – and, courtesy of a leather fastening for the forearm, was particularly manoeuvrable.

**DEADLY SPEAR**
Hoplites went into battle carrying a long spear called a *dory*. This was eight feet of iron-tipped brutality, with a deadly blade at the top end and a spike at the bottom end, which acted as a counter-weight and a secondary killer. The spears used in Alexander the Great's Macedonian phalanx were even longer: 13–21 feet.



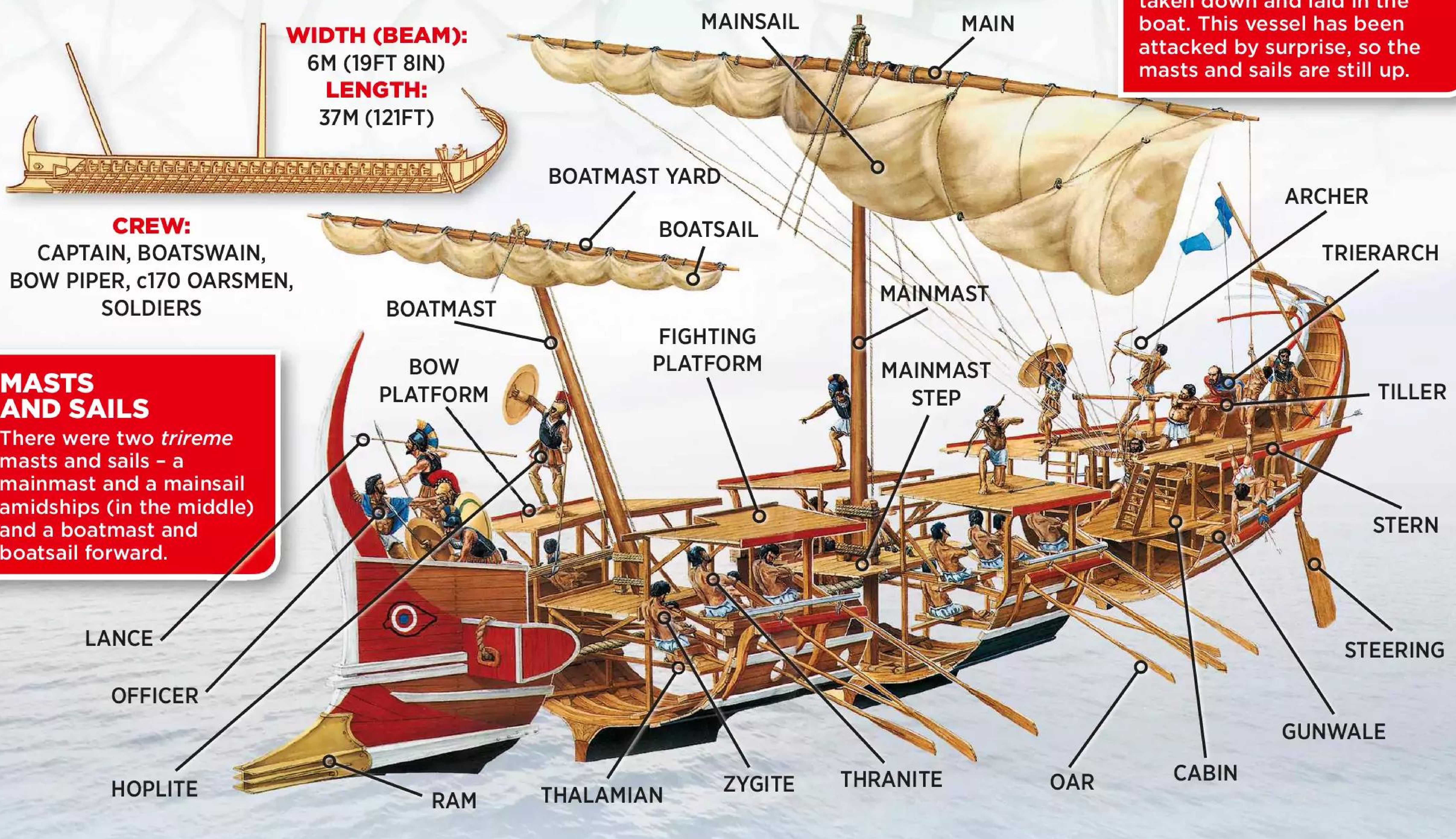
## STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

The Macedonian *phalanx* swept the known world before it

If one hoplite was a fearsome prospect, then how about 256? That was the number that joined forces to form the Macedonian *phalanx*, an infantry formation that was a cornerstone of Alexander the Great's extraordinary conquests in the fourth century BC.

GETTY IMAGES X5, ARC ANGEL X1, AKG IMAGES X1, DK IMAGES X1

**STRIKE SAILS!**
Normally, if a *trireme* went into battle, the sails were left on land and the masts were taken down and laid in the boat. This vessel has been attacked by surprise, so the masts and sails are still up.



**MASTS AND SAILS**
There were two *trireme* masts and sails – a mainmast and a mainsail amidships (in the middle) and a boatmast and boatsail forward.

# KILLER ON THE HIGH SEAS

The *trireme*, the high-speed galley that packed a punch, helped Athens rule the waves in the fifth century BC

No ancient Greek city-state could hold its own without some degree of mastery of the seas – and at the heart of the quest for maritime power was a war galley called the *trireme*. The *trireme* was the dreadnought of its day, a state-of-the-art killing machine that could race into battle at top speed and pack a destructive punch when it got there.

It's thought to have been crewed by around 170 oarsmen in three tiers (known as *thranites, zygites* and *thalamians*) along each side of the vessel, propelling it across the waves at speeds of up to 8mph. But it really came into its own in the heat of battle, courtesy of a bronze-sheathed battering ram affixed to the prow, which was used to sink enemy ships. And if that didn't do the trick, the oarsmen were complemented by a posse of hoplites and archers primed to board enemy ships.

Excavations suggest that the Athenian *trireme* was the epitome of the type, playing a crucial role in the Greek victory over the Persians in the battle of Salamis. Can it be any coincidence that the vessel's heyday – the fifth century BC – coincides with the height of Athens' power?

# BATTLES OF THE ANCIENTS

Three of the most significant clashes in Greek history

## THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR

◀ The Peloponnesian War (460–404 BC) saw Sparta and Athens squaring up for a clash that changed the course of history. The war can be divided into three stages: the first a 10-year series of inconclusive clashes; the second, a six-year truce. Yet there was nothing inconclusive about the third phase. In 405 BC the Spartan general Lysander defeated the Athenian fleet at Aegospotami, leading to Athens' surrender. Sparta was now the undisputed top dog in the region.

## THE BATTLE OF MARATHON

◀ When Athenian forces attacked a huge Persian invading army at Marathon in 490 BC, the stakes couldn't have been higher. Victory would provide a huge shot in the arm for the nascent Athenian democracy; defeat would see it swallowed up by the Persian empire. Fortunately, the Athenians' commander Miltiades executed a brilliant battle plan, drawing the best Persian troops into his army's centre before surrounding and routing them. The scene was now set for ancient Greece's golden age.

## THE MACEDONIAN WARS

◀ These four conflicts, fought between the Greek kingdom of Macedonia and Rome in the third and second centuries BC, saw a dramatic reversal in fortunes. Macedonia under King Philip V bested Rome in the first war, but suffered defeats in the second and third. The fourth saw Macedonia turned into a Roman province in the second century BC; Rome would remain the dominant force in the Mediterranean for generations. ⊙

**WORDS: SPENCER MIZEN**

# FUN AND GAMES

Religion formed the bedrock of ancient Greek life, but there was still time for other leisure activities

In a section of his c350 BC ethical treatise *Nicomachean Ethics*, Greek philosopher Aristotle ponders the meaning and importance of leisure in ancient life. "Happiness is thought to depend on leisure; for we are busy that we may have leisure," he writes. But far from being a passive act of relaxation, Aristotle believed that leisure should take the form of an activity that was meaningful in itself, as a way of cultivating virtue – from music to poetry to philosophy. The goal of work, therefore, was not play, but leisure, as the following examples show…

## THEATRE

**The ancient Greeks took leisure time seriously and theatre provided a way to understand the world around them, and what it meant to be human. The Festival of Dionysus (also known as the Great Dionysia), was held in Athens every March from the sixth century BC – after it was refounded by the tyrant Peisistratus – and played a key role in the development of Greek drama. Honouring Dionysus, the god of wine, the festival is credited with the emergence of tragedy, comedy and satyric drama, with playwrights, actors and sponsors competing for prizes in front of huge audiences.**

### TRAGEDY

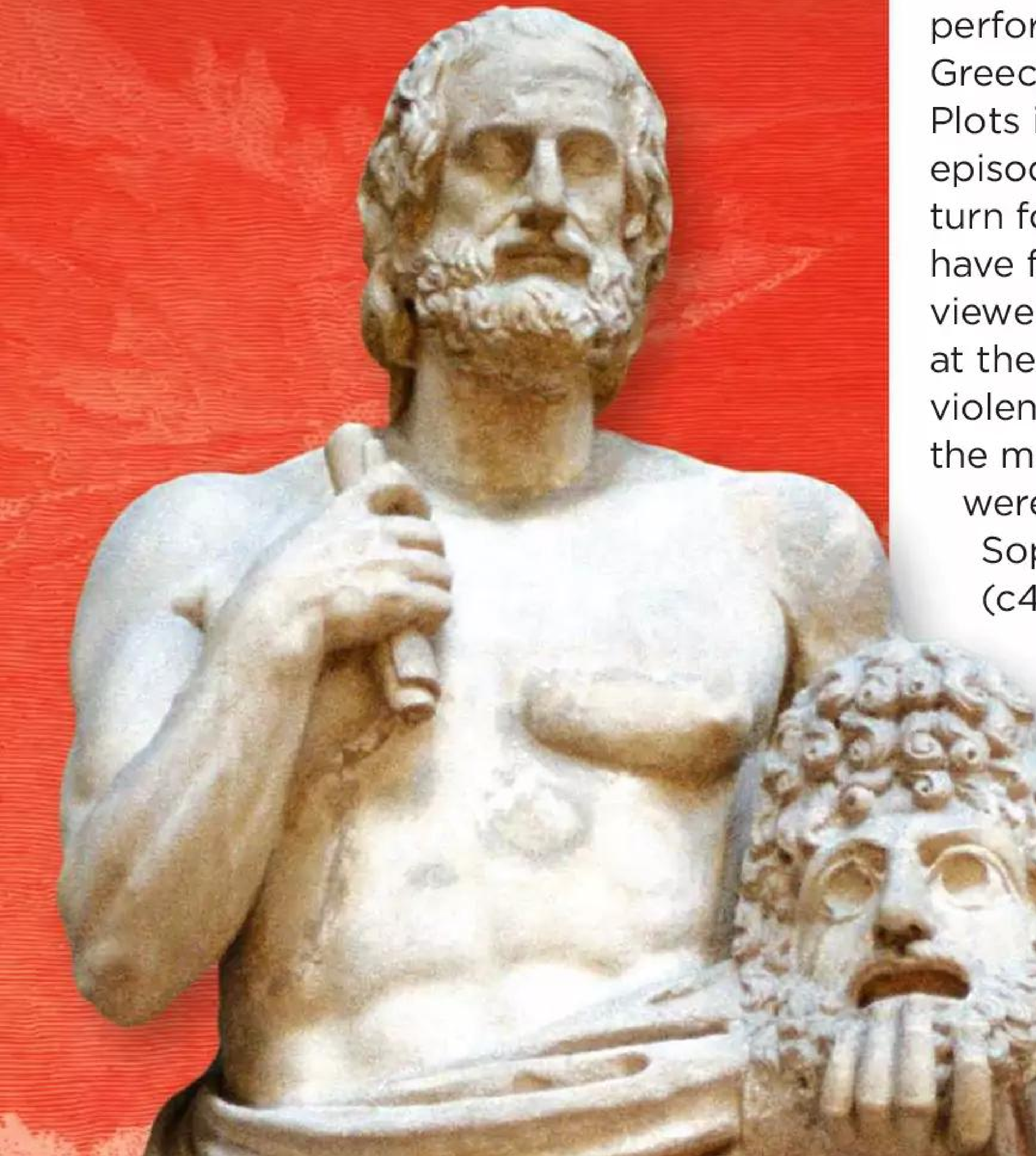
The exact origins of the genre are still debated, but works of tragedy were being performed across theatres in ancient Greece from the late sixth century BC. Plots in tragedies were mostly inspired by episodes from Greek mythology, which in turn formed part of Greek religion, so would have formed serious subject matter for the viewer. Moral rights and wrongs were also at the forefront of tragedy plays, but no violence was permitted on stage. Three of the most famous writers of Greek tragedy were Aeschylus (c525 BC–c456 BC), Sophocles (c496–406 BC) and Euripides (c484–406 BC).

### COMEDY

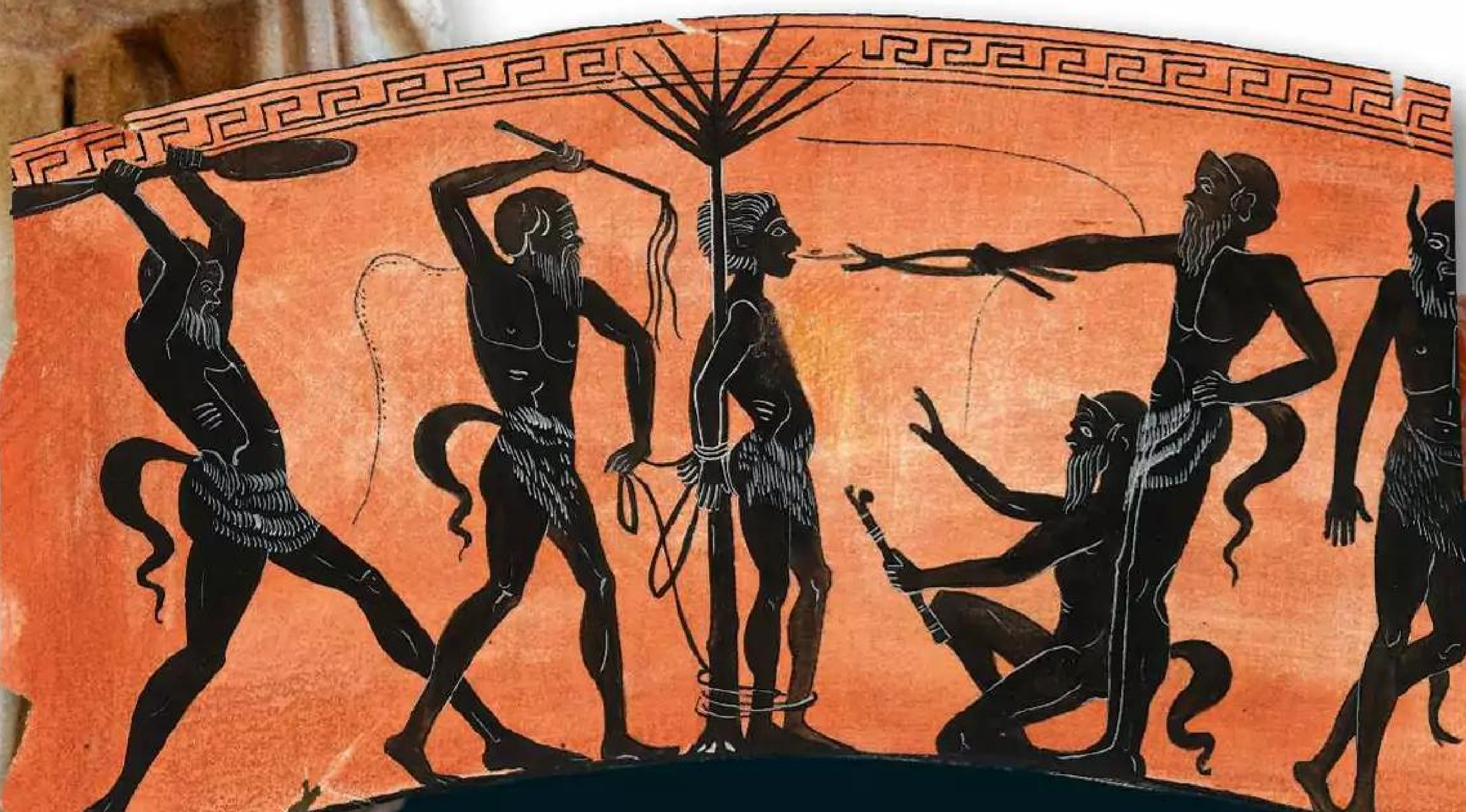
Out of Greek tragedy emerged a new genre – comedy – with perhaps its most notable writer being the Athenian dramatist Aristophanes (c450 BC–c388 BC). His works, like those of many writers of early Greek comedy, were mainly satirical, mocking those in power as well as contemporary events. Over time, as the genre evolved, so too did subject matter, with later dramatists like Menander (342 BC–c292 BC) taking what we might now call a 'sitcom' approach, using fictitious characters from ordinary life.

### SATYR PLAYS

Mixing both comedy and tragedy, satyr plays seem to have been introduced in the early fifth century BC, with tragic poet Pratinas frequently credited with the genre's creation. Much shorter than works of tragedy, satyr plays, of which few survive, were light-hearted plays probably designed to offer a contrast to, or relief from, the seriousness of works of tragedy. Mythical half-human, half-goat figures known as satyrs were the stars of such plays, and the genre's popularity can no doubt be gauged by the visual representations that have survived on vases and pottery from the period.



FAR **LEFT: Euripides holding a mask of tragedy, the theatrical genre in which he excelled**

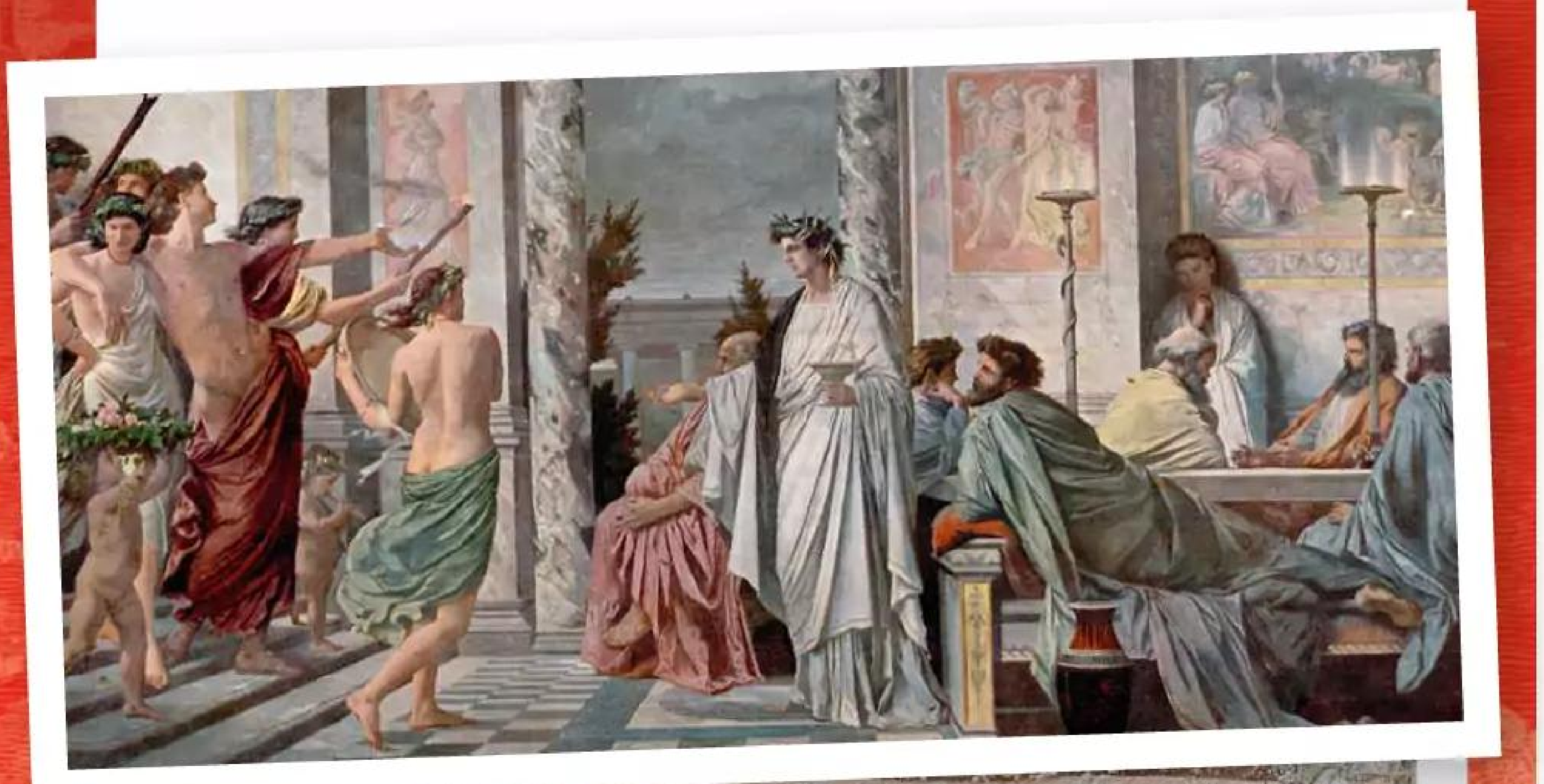


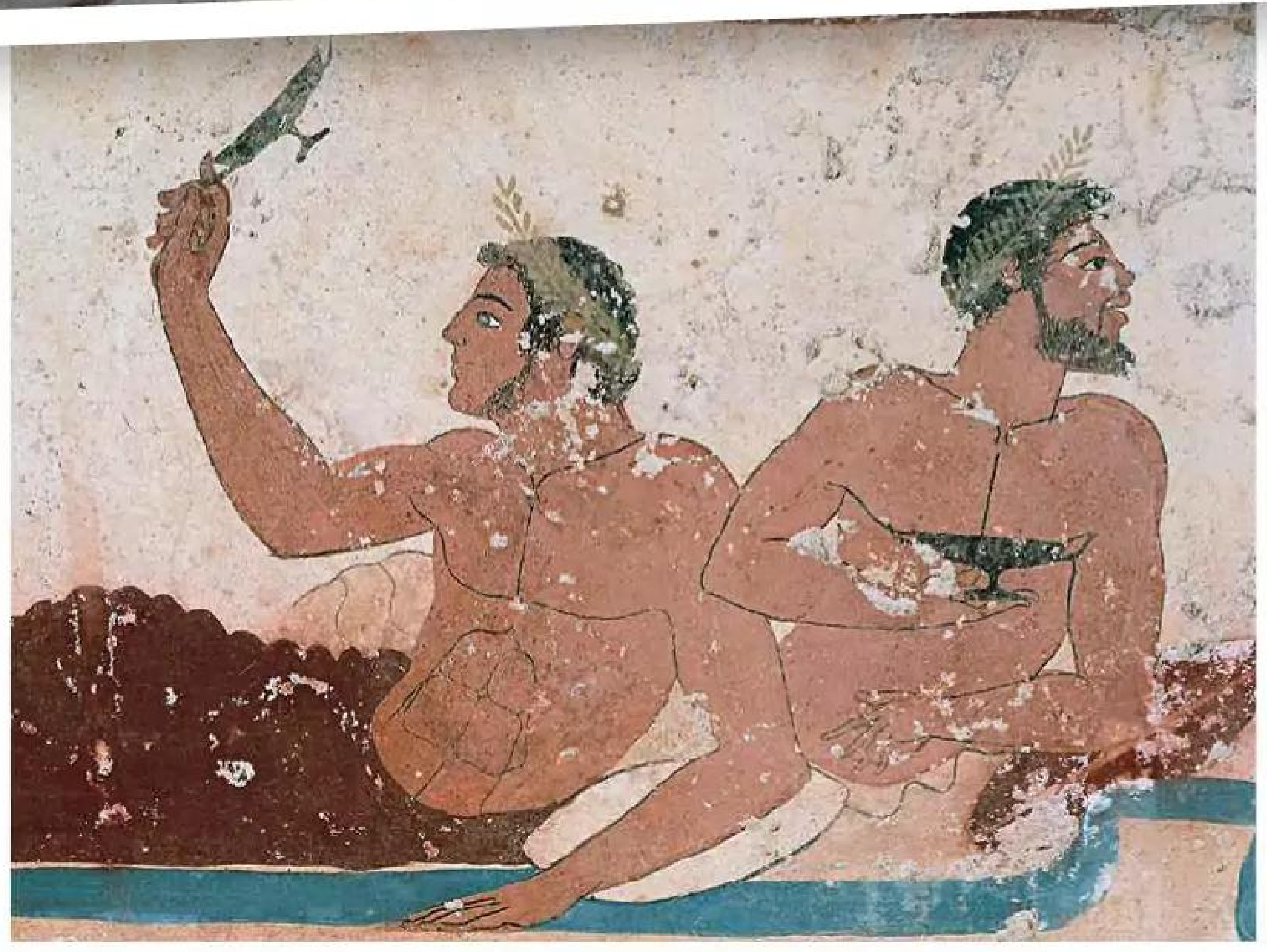
LEFT: **A satyr play, depicted on a vase fragment from the fifth century**

## SYMPOSIA

### An exclusive pastime for aristocratic men, symposia were the height of intellectual luxury

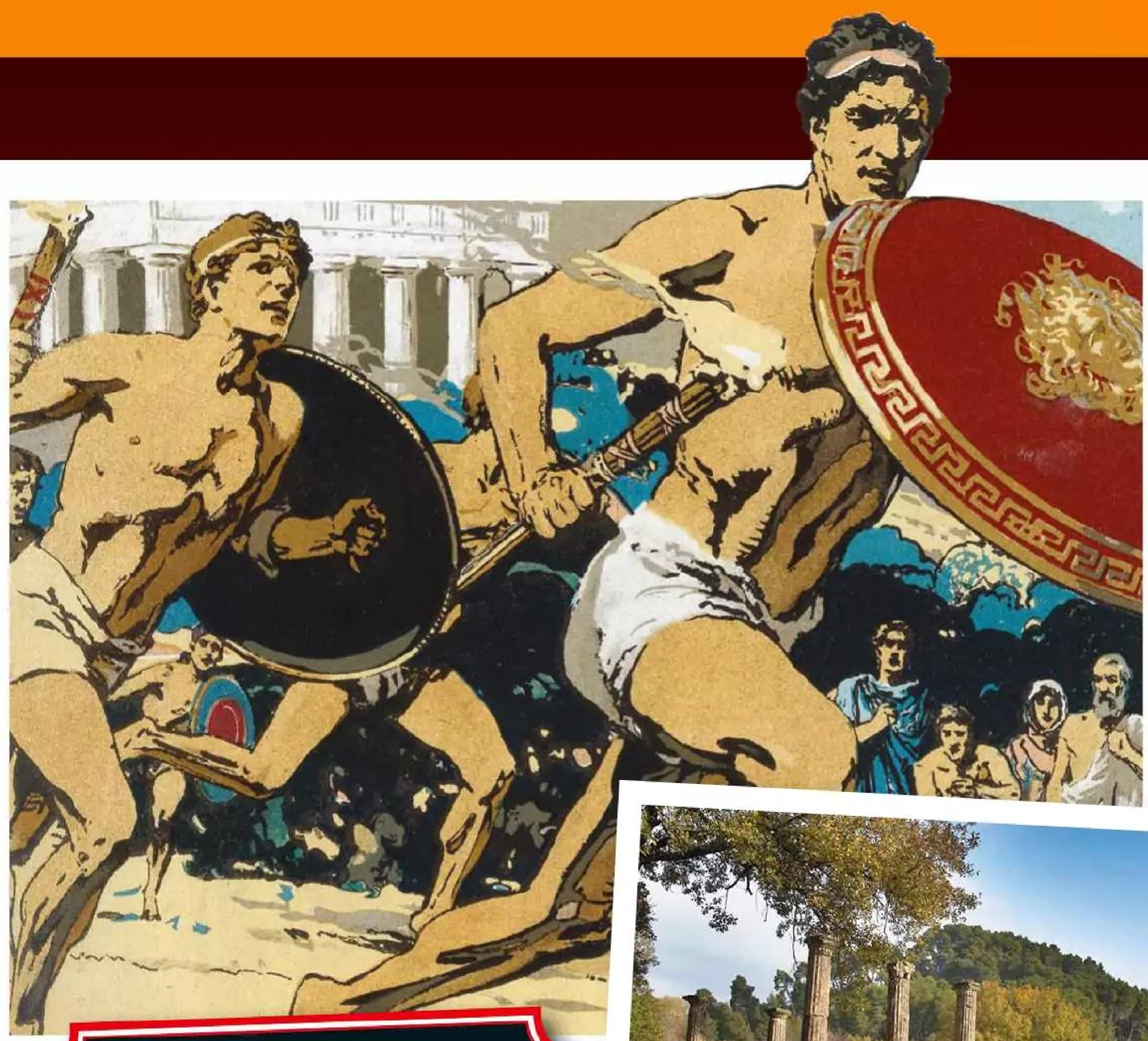
Literally meaning ‘drinking together’, symposia were ritualised drinking events hosted by aristocratic men for their peers as a form of entertainment, as well as to display their wealth and sophistication. Often hosted in a purpose-built room (known as an *andron*), men would recline on long, elaborately decorated couches called *klinai*, set around the edges of the room, and drink wine (diluted with water and mixed in a central *krater*). Musicians and other performers would entertain them and those present would recite poetry and discuss philosophical matters. One popular drinking game commonly played at a symposium was *kottabos*, where the dregs of wine from cups would be thrown either onto the floor, in an attempt to create the first letter of a beloved’s name, or at a target in the centre of the room.





ABOVE: **Two symposium guests prepare for a game of *kottabos* in this fifth-century BC fresco**

TOP: ***The Symposium of Plato* by Anselm Feuerbach, c1869. Such gatherings were an opportunity for philosophical discussion and entertainment**



TOP: **A modern interpretation of the torch-race (part of the Panathenaic Games). The goal was to finish the race with the flame alight**

## SPORTS

### A healthy body was as important as a healthy mind

As the ancient Greeks sought to nurture their minds, so too did they work hard to develop their bodies. Most large cities boasted at least one public gymnasium, where men would train and compete in sports such as wrestling, discus throwing, javelin and boxing, as well as socialise.

Athletic competition formed part of many important religious festivals including the Pythian Games, held at Delphi in honour of Apollo, and, of course, the Olympic Games, held in Olympia in honour of the god Zeus.

Initially a one-day event, the ancient Games were extended to three days in 684 BC, and then to five days in the fifth century BC. With a ‘sacred truce’ called between warring city-states for the duration of the Games, tens of thousands of men, boys and unmarried girls (married women were not allowed to attend) travelled safely to Olympia to watch athletes compete for the honour of their cities. Horse and chariot races, wrestling, boxing, long jump, running, javelin and discus were all on the sporting agenda, with winners earning a wreath of leaves and hero status.

The most important part of the Games was the sacrifice to Zeus, when 100 oxen were sacrificed and burnt, their ash left to form an ever-growing altar that is said to have stood six metres high by AD 200.

Women were not completely left out; they had their own sporting festival at Olympia, too. Held every four years, the Heraia honoured the goddess Hera and saw unmarried women and girls compete in a footrace. ⊙

**WORDS: CHARLOTTE HODGMAN**

GETTY IMAGES X7, ALAMY X2

# THE GODS AND THEIR WHIMS

The polytheistic ancient Greeks worshipped a pantheon of deities

The ancient Greeks were polytheistic, meaning that they worshipped multiple deities as well as other supernatural beings. At the core of their religious system were 12 gods and goddesses known as the Olympians (*see opposite page*), who were venerated around Greece, as well as in Greek cities around the Black Sea and other colonies in the western Mediterranean. These deities existed within a hierarchy, with Zeus – king of the gods – holding the top position. They had very different characters and temperaments, with many of them notable for their character flaws (such as jealousy, infidelity and vanity) on top of their great deeds and powers.

The gods were tied closely to individual cities: Athena, for example, was closely associated with Athens, while Zeus was linked with the sacred site of Olympia, in which the Olympic Games were held in his honour. The ancient Greeks also looked to the different deities to help them with specific circumstances or needs, such as Hera for weddings and Ares for matters of war.

Unlike many religions followed today, the ancient Greeks had no common religious text underpinning their belief system – although Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and Hesiod's *Theogony* had considerable influence. The relationship between humans and deities was instead based primarily on acts of exchange, with the gods and goddesses offered – and appeased with – gifts, offerings and animal sacrifices.

Religious practices and events were typically organised at a local level, with ceremonies undertaken at altars – and later temples – devoted to individual gods. One particularly gruesome observance was *pharmākos*, in which a man or woman perceived to be 'ugly' was selected as a scapegoat – they would be fed and paraded around before being beaten with green twigs. The scapegoat would then either be ostracised from their community or stoned to death.

There were two main ways of becoming a priest in ancient Greece; the position was either inherited from a parent (either male or female, for some women could be priests too), or a person was appointed by a priest on his or her deathbed. Priests were generally associated with one god specifically, and while they organised religious ceremonies and prayers they were not necessarily religious experts.

The ancient Greeks had no word for religion. The closest terms were *eusebeia* (piety) and *threskeia* (cult). Nonetheless, religious practices and faith were intertwined with daily life. Everything in the natural world was spiritual and divine, and most events were attributed to the influence of the gods. Religious festivals were also important events; the most famous were held every four years at Olympia, Delphi, Nemea and Isthmia and included feasting, sacrifice and athletic competitions. ⊙

**WORDS: RACHEL DINNING**

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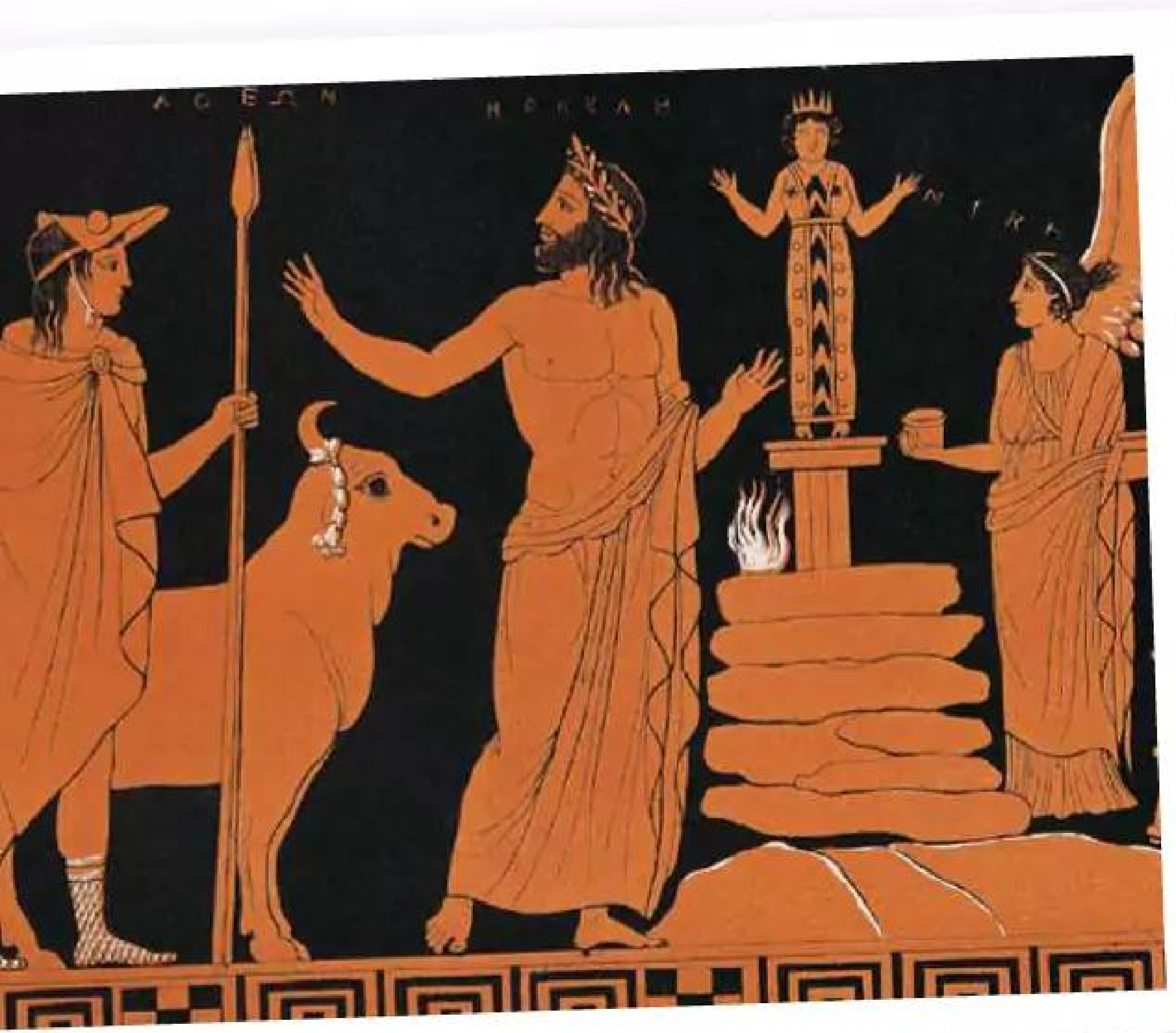


The gods could be appeased by gifts; here, Herakles sacrifices a bull to Aphrodite

## TW

### APHRODITE

GODDESS OF SEXUAL LOVE AND BEAUTY

When Cronos castrated his father Uranus and threw his testicles into the sea, the waters frothed and birthed the goddess Aphrodite. Although primarily known as the goddess of sexual love, fertility and beauty, Aphrodite – who was married to Ares – was also worshipped as a deity of the sea. As befits her origin story, her name comes from the Greek word *aphros*, meaning foam.

### ATHENA

GODDESS OF WAR, HANDICRAFT AND REASON

Athena was said to have been the favourite child of Zeus. It is said she was born without a mother, instead springing forth from Zeus' forehead (although one story suggests this only occurred after Zeus devoured the pregnant Metis, goddess of counsel). Over time Athena became known as the goddess of war, representing more civilised aspects of battle such as skill, wisdom and justice.

### ARTEMIS

GODDESS OF WILD ANIMALS AND THE HUNT

Known for her deftness with a bow and her ability to turn herself – and others – into animals, Artemis was one of the most venerated of Greek deities. Her temple at Ephesus was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World until its destruction in AD 401.

# ELVE TOP OLYMPIANS

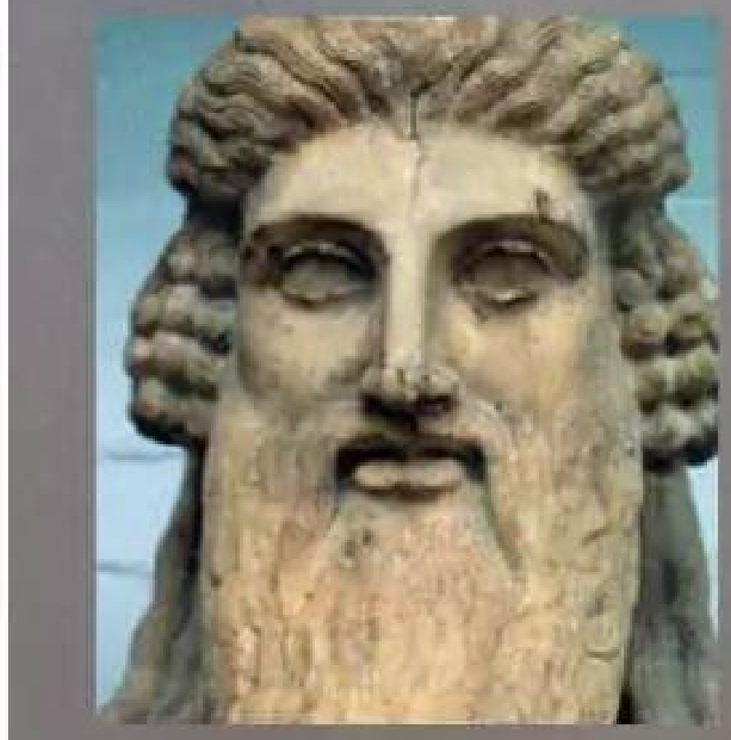
## ARES

GOD OF WAR

In contrast to his sister Athena, Ares embodied the more brutal aspects of warfare. He was never particularly popular with the Greek public and – despite receiving sacrifices in times of warfare – had few formal places of worship in temples. His offspring inherited his penchant for violence: they included Diomedes (who fed his horses a diet of human flesh) and Kyknos (who used strangers' heads to build a temple to his father).

## DIONYSUS

GOD OF GRAPE-HARVEST, WINEMAKING AND WINE



Dionysus was the only Olympian with a mortal parent: Semele, lover of Zeus. He gained a cult-like status and was worshipped in woods rather than in temples. According to legend, Dionysus was one of the only gods to successfully return a dead person from the Underworld; this was his mother, who had burned to a crisp after being tricked by Hera into seeing Zeus in his true form.

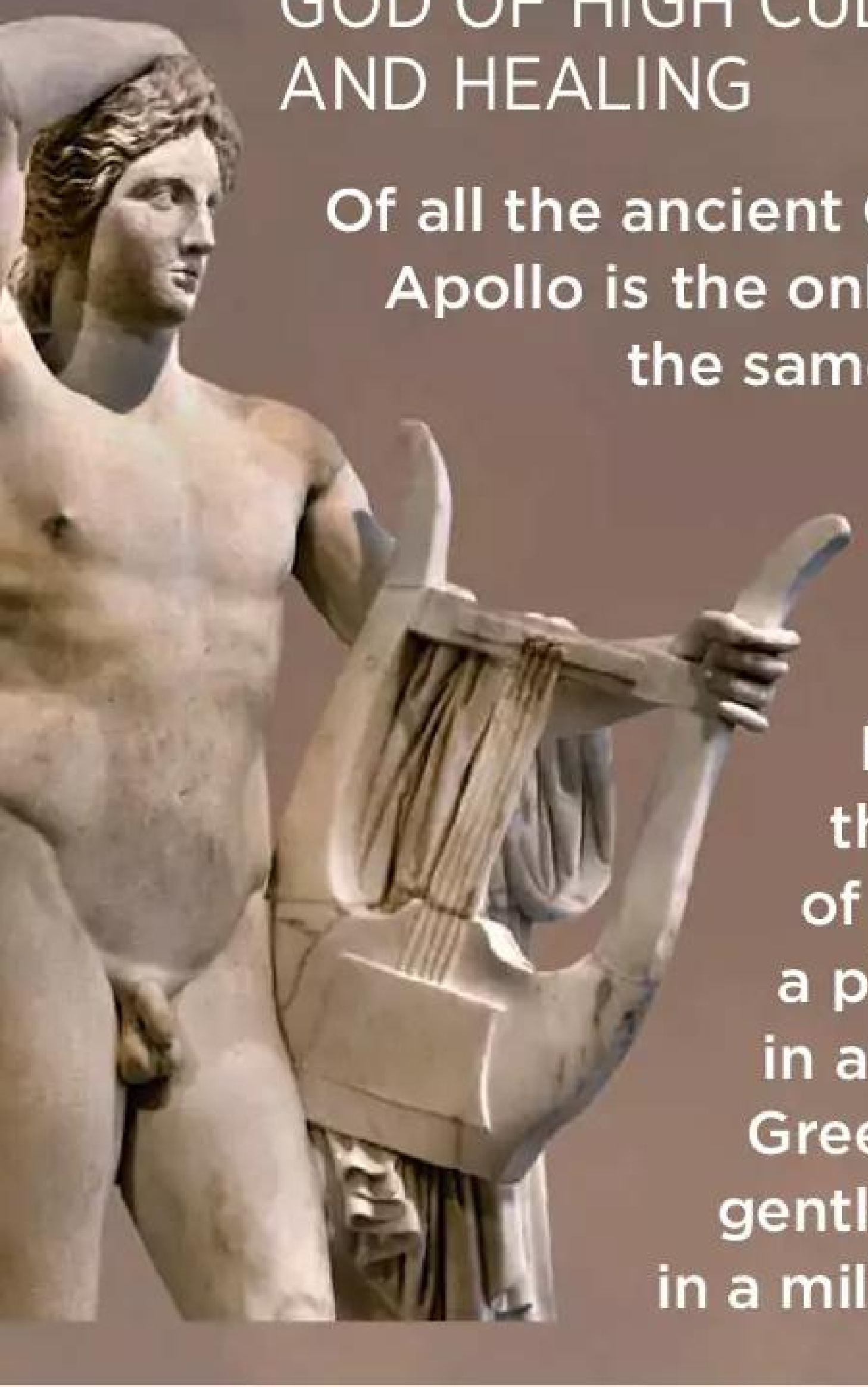
## HERMES

HERALD OF THE GODS

In Homer's *Odyssey*, Hermes appears as a messenger of the gods as well as an escort of the dead on their way to the Underworld, but he was also associated with cattle, sheep and agriculture. People in ancient Greece would attribute to Hermes incidents of good fortune, such as the discovery of small treasures.

## APOLLO

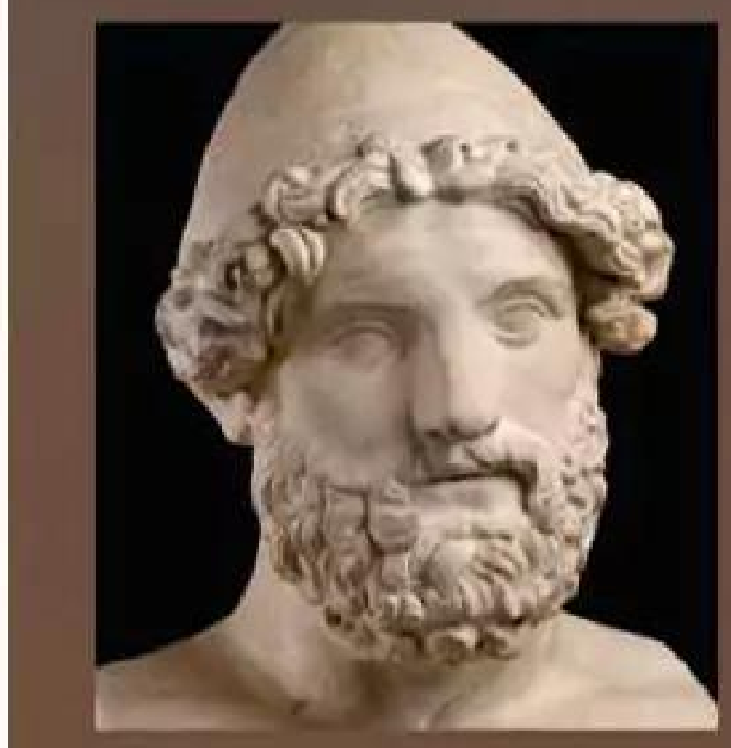
GOD OF HIGH CULTURE AND HEALING



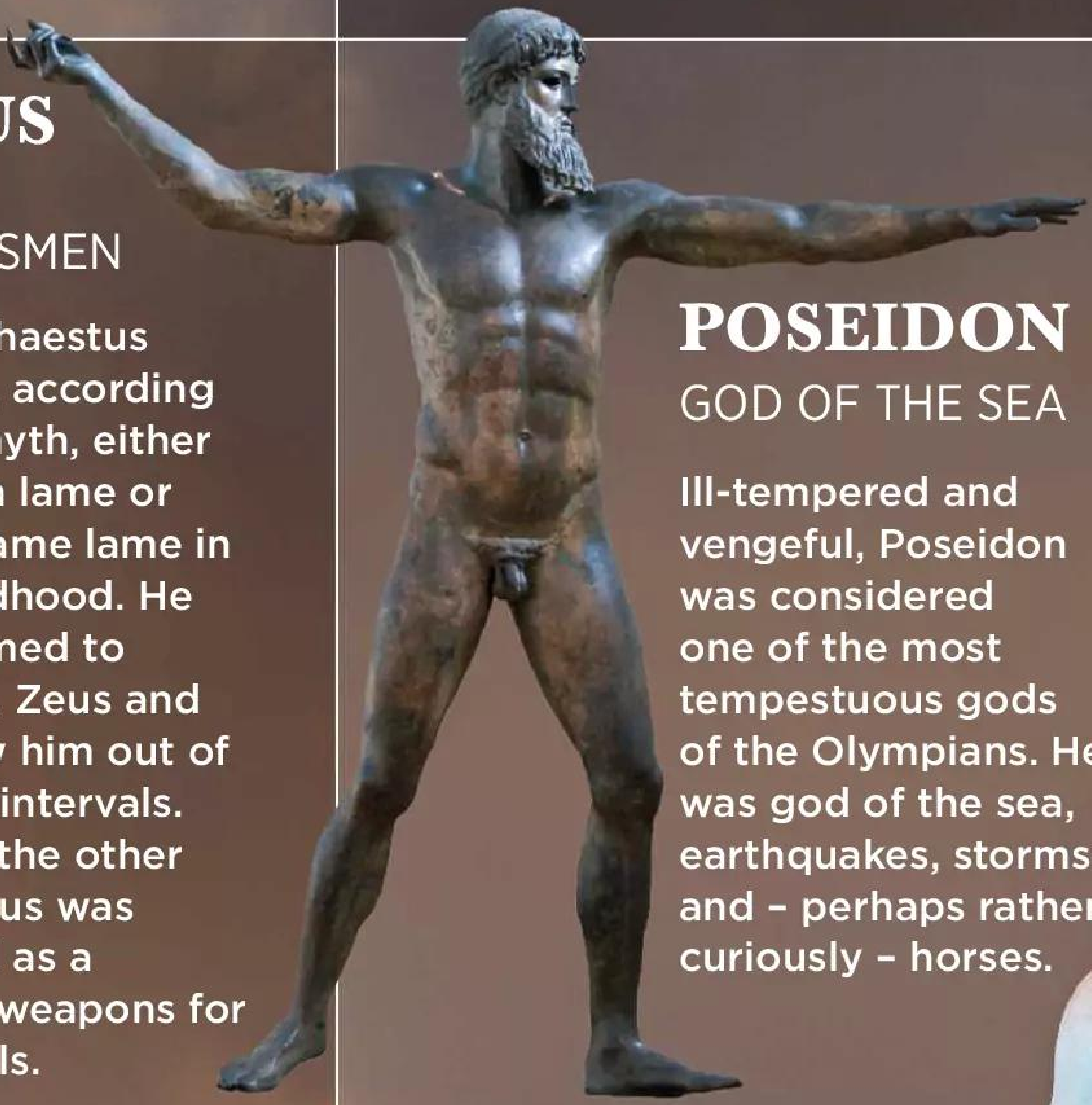
Of all the ancient Greek gods, Apollo is the only one to have the same name in Roman mythology. Beautiful and athletic, he is considered the embodiment of *kalos kagathos*, a phrase used in ancient Greece to refer to gentlemanly conduct in a military context.

## HEPHAESTUS

GOD OF FIRE AND PATRON OF CRAFTSMEN



Hephaestus was, according to myth, either born lame or became lame in childhood. He seemed to displease his parents, Zeus and Hera, who each threw him out of Olympus at different intervals. Considered 'ugly' by the other Olympians, Hephaestus was venerated for his skill as a craftsman and made weapons for both gods and mortals.



## POSEIDON

GOD OF THE SEA

Ill-tempered and vengeful, Poseidon was considered one of the most tempestuous gods of the Olympians. He was god of the sea, earthquakes, storms and – perhaps rather curiously – horses.

## DEMETER

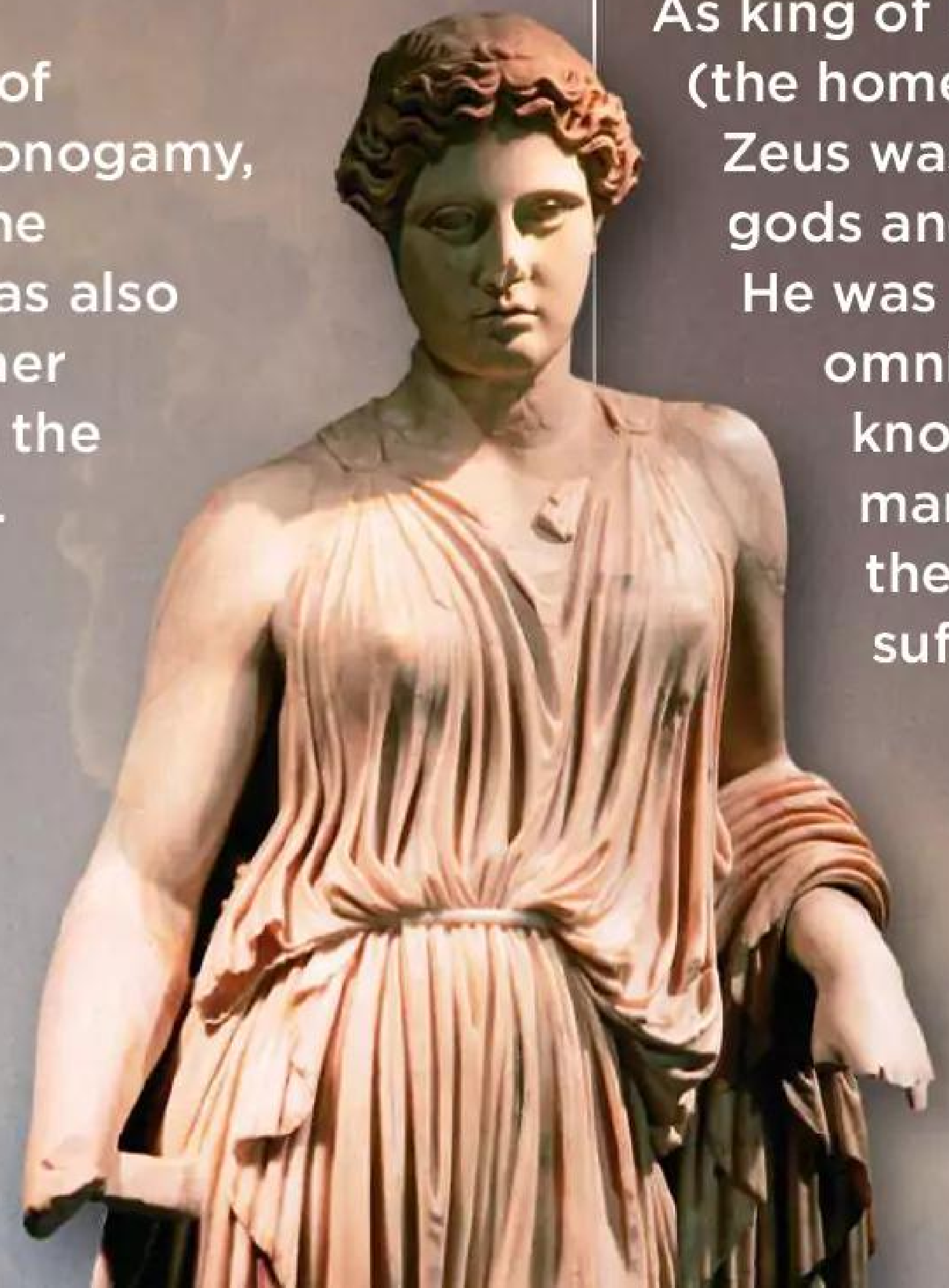
GODDESS OF HARVEST AND AGRICULTURE

Demeter was said to have taught humans how to sow and plough food, thereby putting an end to their formerly nomadic existence. But just as her powers could be fruitful, so too could they be disastrous: she was believed to bestow famine upon those who displeased her. As goddess of fertility, she also possessed the ability to gift women with a good or bad pregnancy.

## HERA

GODDESS OF WOMEN, MARRIAGE, FAMILY AND CHILDBIRTH

As the goddess of marriage and monogamy, it's fitting that the goddess Hera was also well-known for her vengeful rage in the face of infidelity. She repeatedly sought revenge on her husband Zeus' many mistresses and illegitimate children.



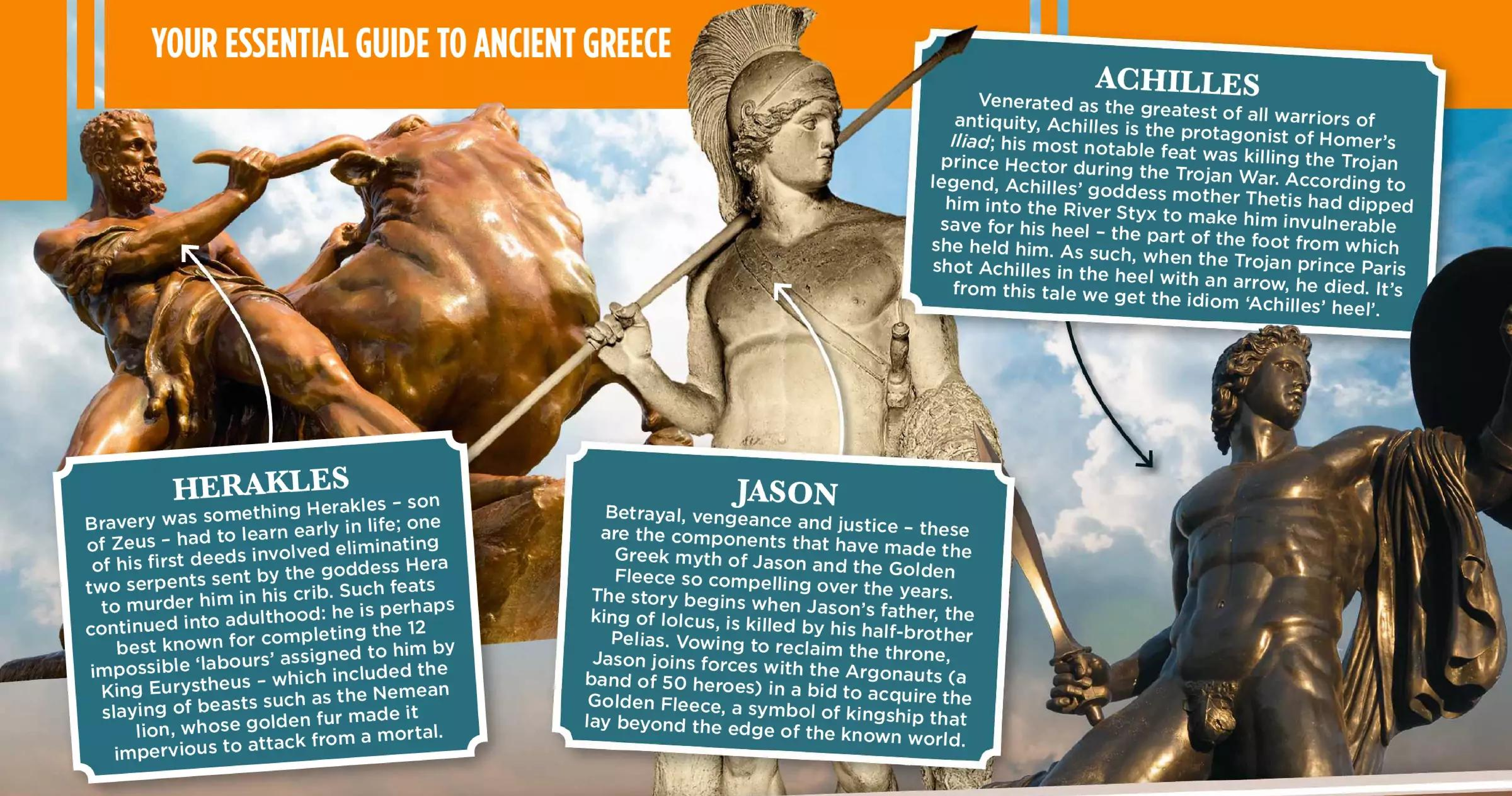
## ZEUS

FATHER OF GODS AND MEN

As king of Mount Olympus (the home of Greek gods) Zeus was father of both gods and mortals alike. He was believed to be omnipotent and was known for having many lovers (much to the chagrin of his long-suffering wife, Hera). ▶

# SIX HEROES AND VILLAINS OF GREEK MYTHOLOGY

The gods weren't the only ones to make mischief – they were supported by a cast of monsters, Titans and heroes



## HERAKLES

Bravery was something Herakles – son of Zeus – had to learn early in life; one of his first deeds involved eliminating two serpents sent by the goddess Hera to murder him in his crib. Such feats continued into adulthood: he is perhaps best known for completing the 12 impossible 'labours' assigned to him by King Eurystheus – which included the slaying of beasts such as the Nemean lion, whose golden fur made it impervious to attack from a mortal.

## JASON

Betrayal, vengeance and justice – these are the components that have made the Greek myth of Jason and the Golden Fleece so compelling over the years. The story begins when Jason's father, the king of Iolcus, is killed by his half-brother Pelias. Vowing to reclaim the throne, Jason joins forces with the Argonauts (a band of 50 heroes) in a bid to acquire the Golden Fleece, a symbol of kingship that lay beyond the edge of the known world.

## ACHILLES

Venerated as the greatest of all warriors of antiquity, Achilles is the protagonist of Homer's *Iliad*; his most notable feat was killing the Trojan prince Hector during the Trojan War. According to legend, Achilles' goddess mother Thetis had dipped him into the River Styx to make him invulnerable save for his heel – the part of the foot from which she held him. As such, when the Trojan prince Paris shot Achilles in the heel with an arrow, he died. It's from this tale we get the idiom 'Achilles' heel'.

## MEDUSA

Medusa was certainly monstrous, although it could be argued that her villainous deeds were somewhat out of her control. The daughter of the sea gods Phorcys and Ceto, she was a breathtakingly beautiful mortal woman – until she invoked the jealousy of Athena and was transformed into a hideous creature with snakes for hair. According to legend, any person who gazed upon Medusa would turn to stone.

## CRONOS

Greek mythology has its fair share of gruesome deeds and grisly goings-on, but those attributed to Cronos are among the most disturbing. The son of Uranus, ruler of the universe, Cronos dispatched the genitals of his father with a great stone sickle before casting his testicles into the sea. When his own children – Demeter, Hestia, Hera, Hades and Poseidon – were born, Cronos devoured them all in a bid to circumvent a prophecy that suggested they were going to overthrow him.

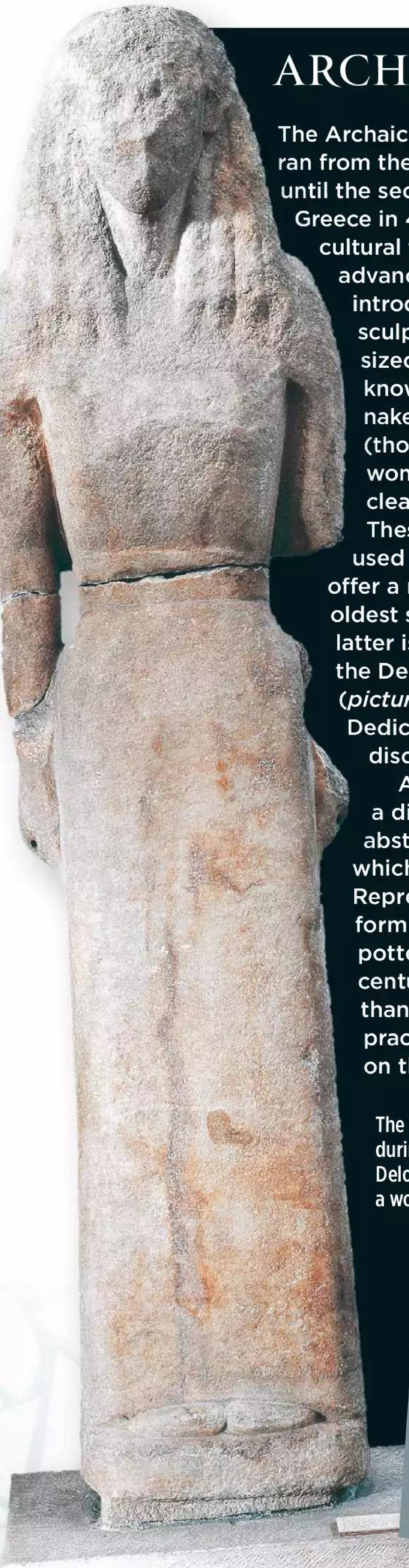
## THE MINOTAUR

According to Athenian legend, King Minos – one of Zeus' many sons – imprisoned the murderous minotaur, a mythological creature that was part-bull and part-man (and also the offspring of Minos' wife, Pasiphae) within a labyrinth on the island of Crete. Every nine years, a tribute of children (seven Athenian boys and seven maidens) were fed to the monster until it was killed by Theseus, son of the Athenian king, Aegeus. ⊙

GETTY IMAGES X4, ALAMY X5

# STYLE SETTERS

From c800 BC until the Roman occupation of the Greek world nearly 800 years later, Greek society moved through three main periods – Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic. With each period came cultural changes that were reflected in the visual arts, whether sculpture, vase painting, wall painting or mosaics. And as Greek power filtered across its borders, so too did its cultural impact.



## ARCHAIC PERIOD

The Archaic period in Greek history ran from the eighth century BC until the second Persian invasion of Greece in 480 BC. In artistic and cultural terms, the most significant advance during this time was the introduction of monumental sculpture, principally life-sized figures in hard stone known as *kouroi* (those of naked young men) or *korai* (those of clothed or draped women), which showed a clear Egyptian influence. These were created and used to either mark graves or offer a religious dedication. The oldest surviving example of the latter is the marble sculpture the Dedication of Nikandre (*pictured left*), created c650 BC. Dedicated to Artemis, it was discovered in 1878.

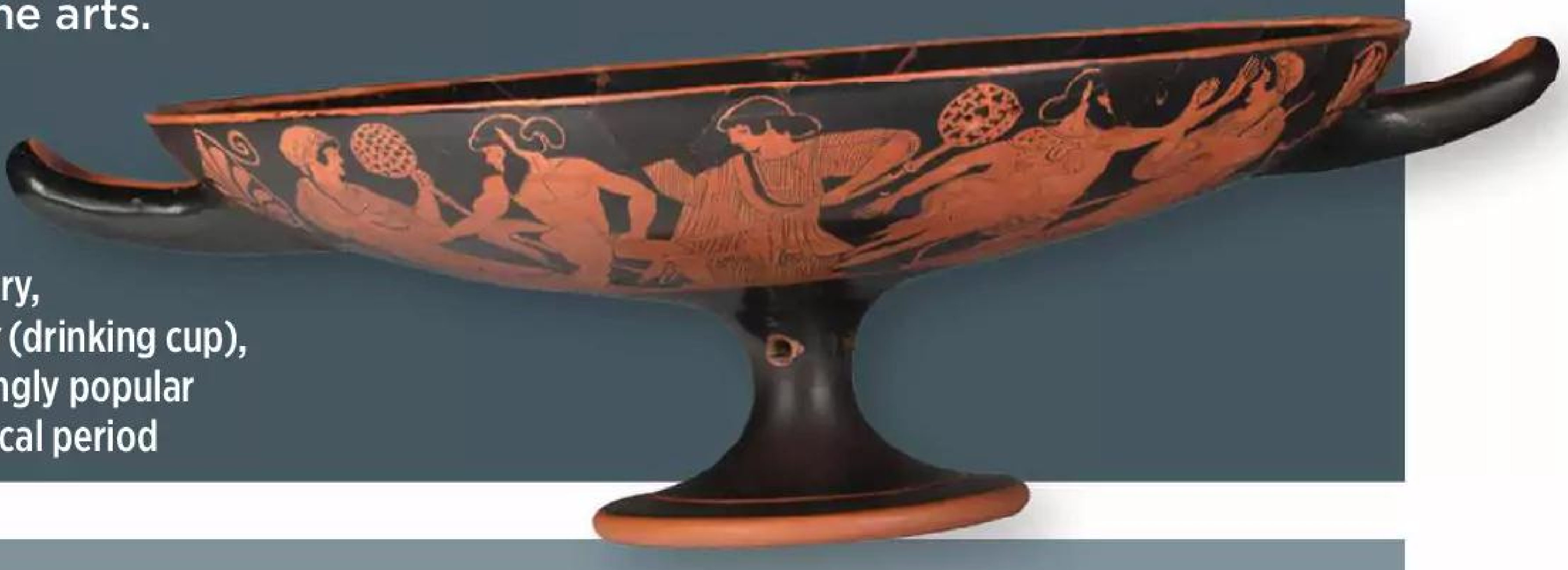
Archaic pottery showed a distinct movement from abstract decoration to that which was more figurative. Representations of the human form first adorned Cretan pottery in the early ninth century BC, taking more than a century before the practice was widespread on the mainland.

The Dedication of Nikandre was found during excavations on the island of Delos. It was dedicated to Artemis by a woman who hailed from Naxos

## CLASSICAL PERIOD

Following the defeat of the second Persian invasion, Athens was the dominant force in Greece in many aspects of life, whether politics, economics or culture. Lasting around 160 years until the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC, this golden age saw statuary become notably more realistic in its proportions and form, a movement led by the pioneering Polykleitos of Argos. Bronze rather than hard stone became the dominant material for freestanding sculptures, which wasn't the only convention to be broken during this period. With his c350 BC marble sculpture of Aphrodite of Knidos, Praxiteles presented an undraped woman for the first time.

Realism was also a guiding principle for Greece's vase painters in the Classical period. With the popular red-figure technique, human representations were increasingly more faithful, particularly when rendering motion. Douris, Makron and the anonymous 'Kleophrades Painter' were notable vase painters whose influence and reach were amplified by the expansionism of Alexander the Great, himself a great patron of the arts.



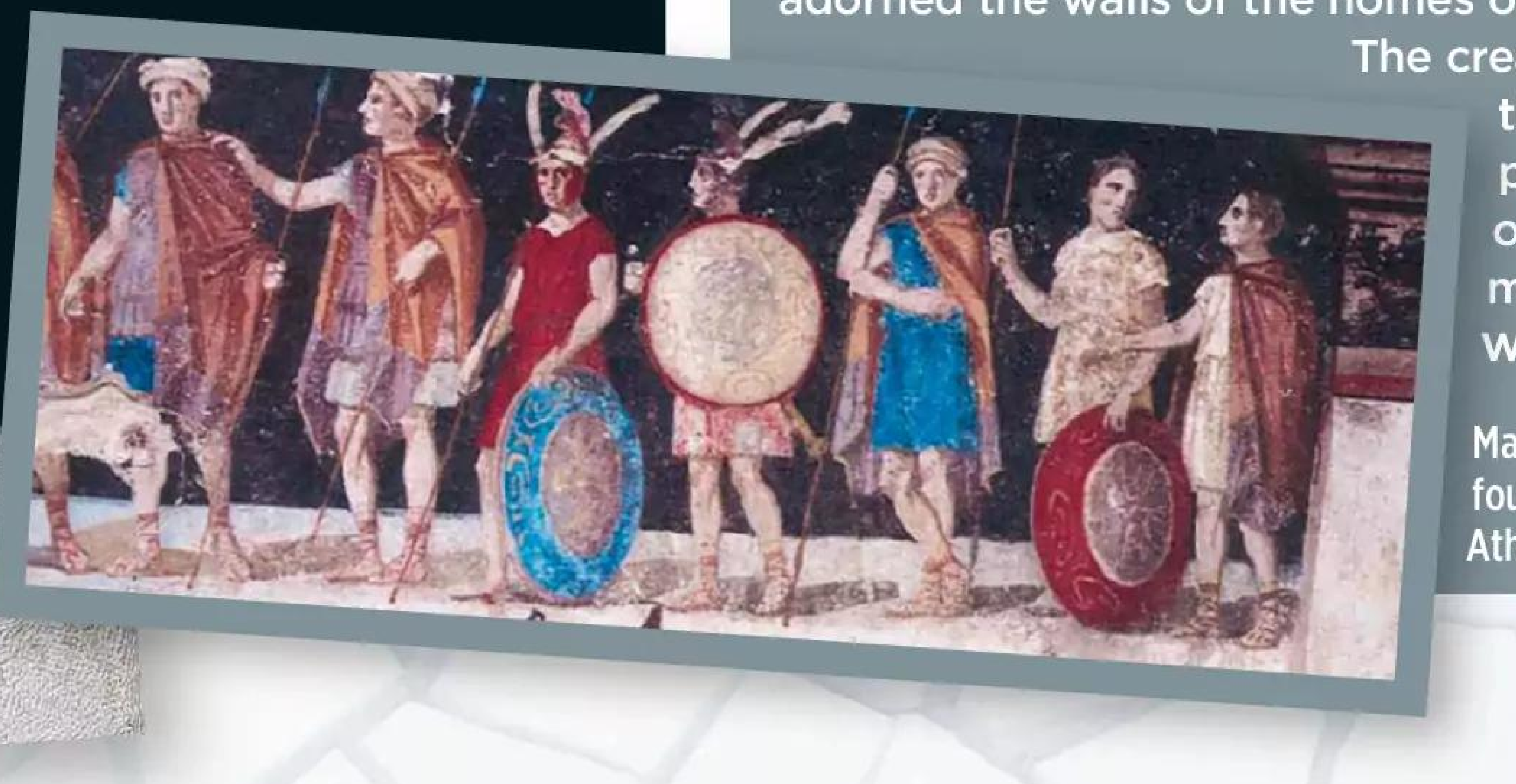
Red-figure pottery, such as this *kylix* (drinking cup), became increasingly popular during the Classical period

## HELLENISTIC PERIOD

If you believe Pliny the Elder, the Hellenistic period – the near-300-year-period between Alexander the Great's death and the completion of the Roman conquest of the Greek world – was culturally moribund. Describing the end of the Classical period, he wrote "then art ceased". But there were definite advancements in sculpture and painting. Sculptors developed the portrayal of emotion in their work, while their subjects became more prosaic and everyday, whether common people, children or animals. No longer was sculpture simply concerned with ideals of beauty.

There was also a more egalitarian approach to wall paintings. Previously only found in places of worship or tombs, such artworks now adorned the walls of the homes of important members of Greek society. The creation of mosaics also advanced, with the use of exclusively black and white pebbles superseded by the introduction of coloured ones, along with other materials, such as glass and terracotta. ⊙

**WORDS: NIGE TASSELL**



Macedonian soldiers pictured on a fourth-century BC tomb from Agios Athanasios, near Thessaloniki

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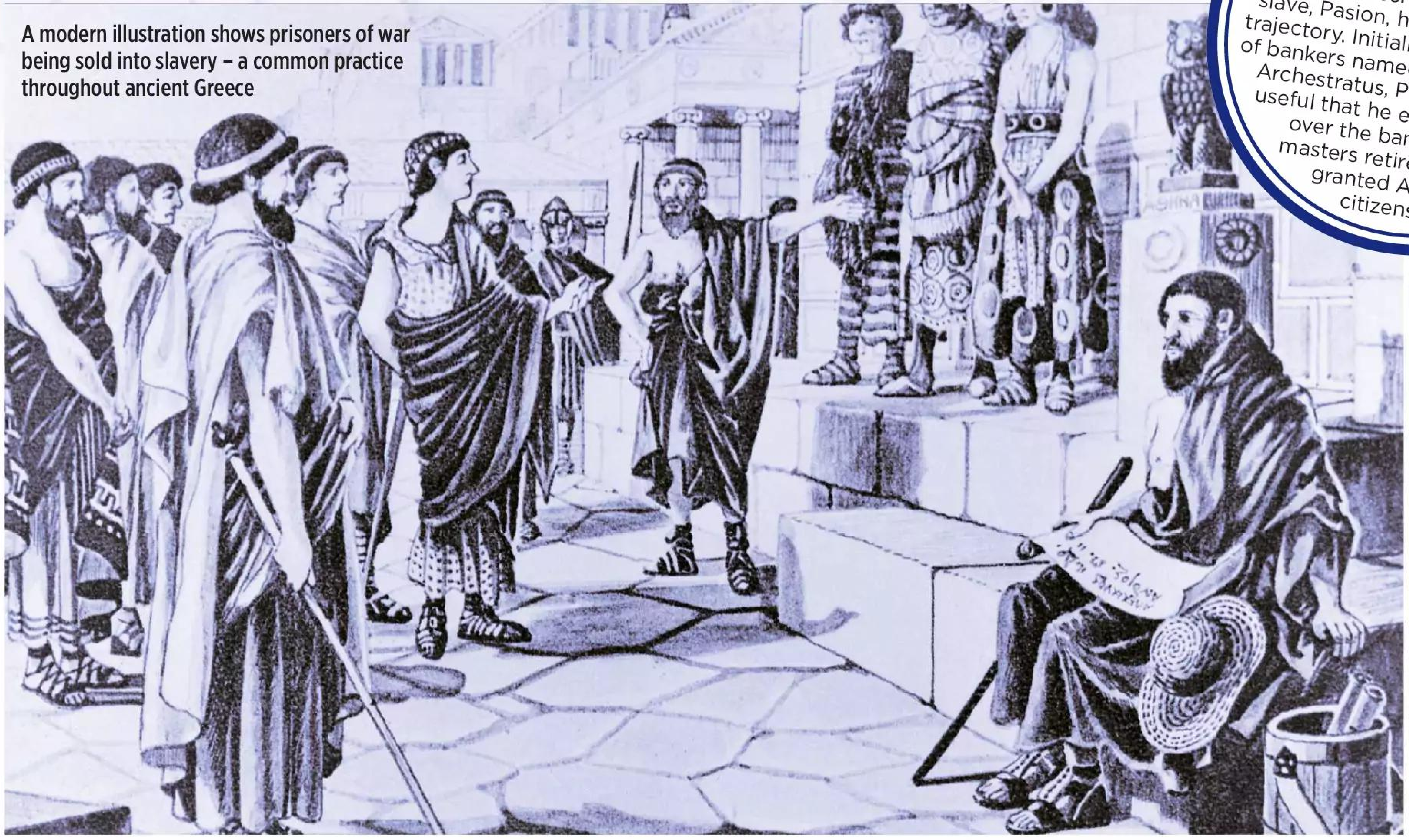


A modern illustration shows prisoners of war being sold into slavery – a common practice throughout ancient Greece

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**RAGS TO RICHES**

The fourth-century BC Athenian slave, Pasion, had an unusual life trajectory. Initially owned by a pair of bankers named Antisthenes and Archestratus, Pasion proved so useful that he ended up taking over the bank when his masters retired, and was granted Athenian citizenship.

ABOVE RIGHT: **An ancient funerary relief, dated c430 BC, depicts a young man with his slave**

RIGHT: **Female slaves usually carried out domestic duties such as preparing food or fetching water**

# TRAPPED IN SERVITUDE

## Treating other humans as property was part and parcel of Greek life, with enslaved people 'used' across virtually all areas of society

Enslaved people were an integral part of society in ancient Greece. Or, rather, the work they were involuntarily charged to undertake was an integral part of society – tasks, duties and jobs that the Greek citizens were broadly loath to carry out themselves.

Servitude was widespread in Greek antiquity. Athens alone was home to an estimated 60,000–80,000 slaves during the fifth and fourth centuries BC, with each household having an average of three or four enslaved people attached to it. Athenian slaves tended to enjoy more freedom than those elsewhere. A typical Athenian slave formed part of his master's household and was initially welcomed with ceremony, offered nuts and fruits, just as a new bride might be. While denied many of the judicial rights possessed by Athens' citizens, Athenian slaves enjoyed a few personal liberties: they could follow their own religious customs and they couldn't be struck by their master.

### VARIED FORTUNES

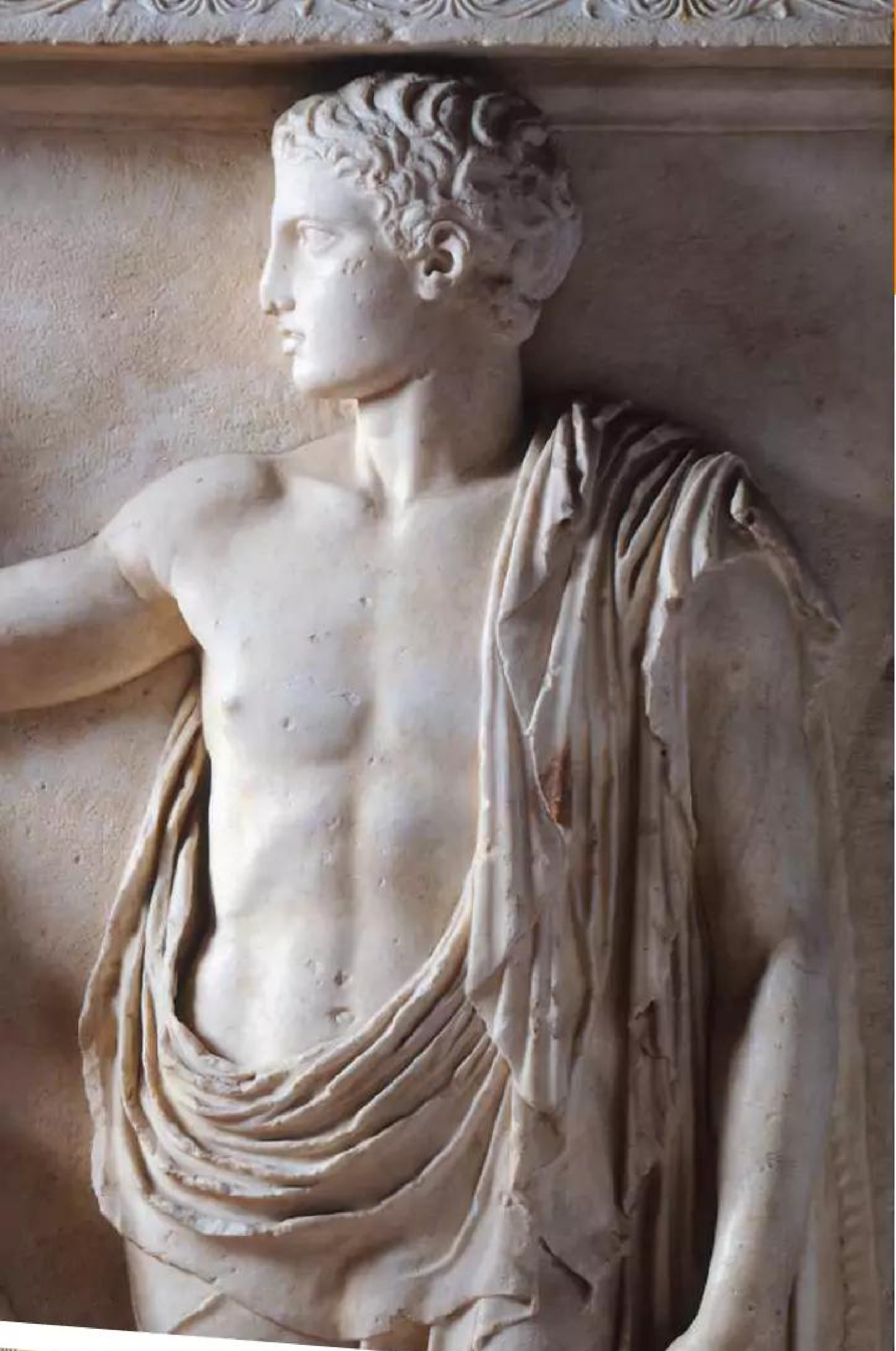
But, as the property of their master, Athenian slaves could still be sold off in the blink of an eye. Even Aristotle, arguably one of Athens' more progressive thinkers, referred to enslaved people as *ktêma empsuchon* – a phrase that roughly translates as 'animate property', or 'property that breathes'.

If they fell on hard times, Athenians could become a slave themselves through a practice called debt enslavement. For instance, if they leased land from a landowner but fell behind on the rent payments, they would become 'enslaved' to that landowner until the debt had been fully paid off. Many enslaved people were foreigners who had been captured during wars; the sons of defeated enemies might also be forced into slavehood, sometimes ending up serving the clients of male brothels. Or enslaved people were simply born into servitude, resigned to a life of comparative captivity as they inherited the family 'trade'.

So-called chattel slaves were those owned by a master who viewed them as his possession, while *dêmosioi* were public slaves owned by the state and who worked for the civic good, whether in non-manual roles, such as clerks, or undertaking more physical work, such as road construction. All, though, were united in being denied civic rights and disqualified from participating in politics.

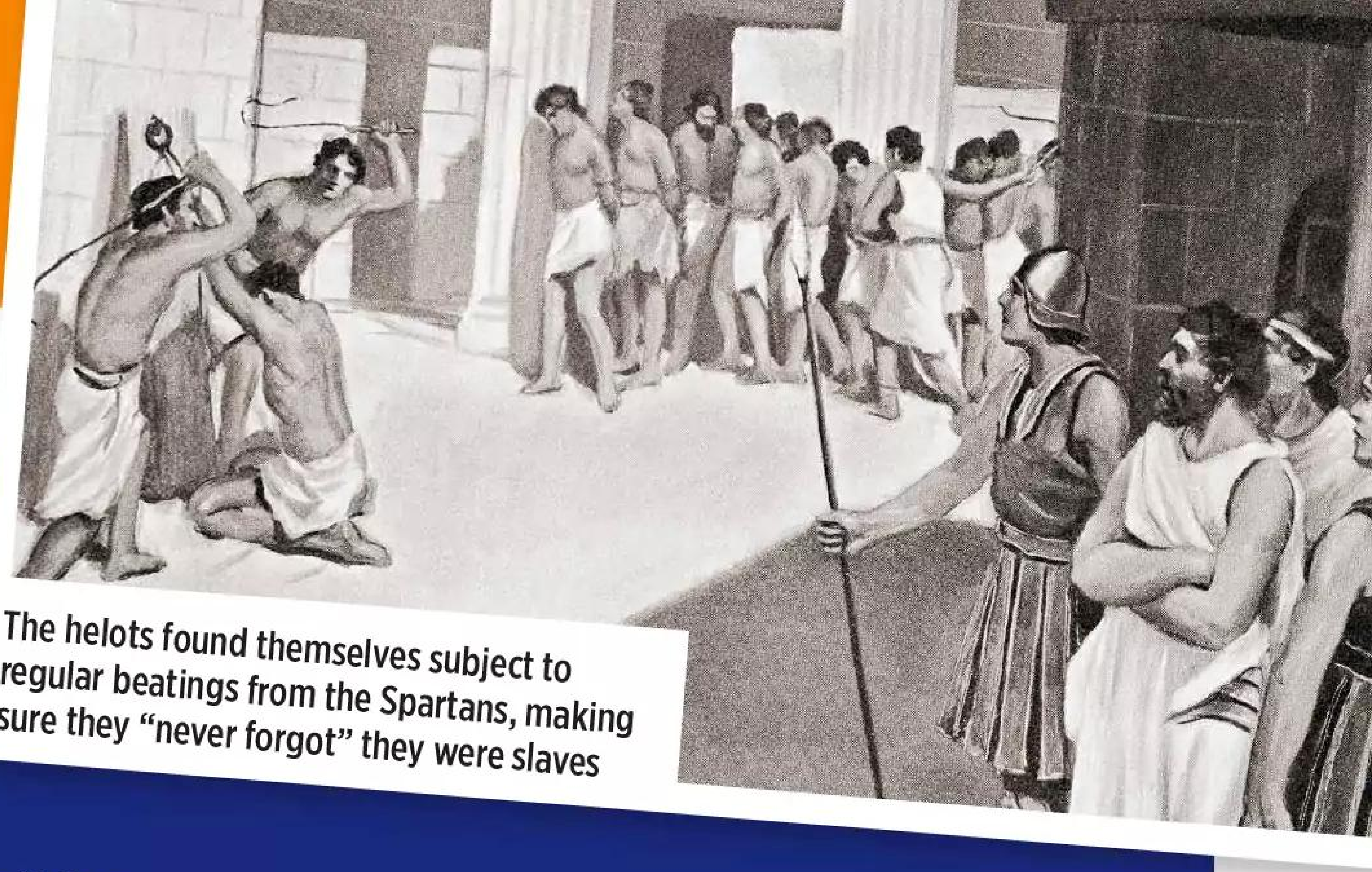
The most common type of work for enslaved people was within the agricultural sector, although many were otherwise set to task in quarries

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X3



## HELOTS

### Life could be brutal for one particular group of people in ancient Sparta

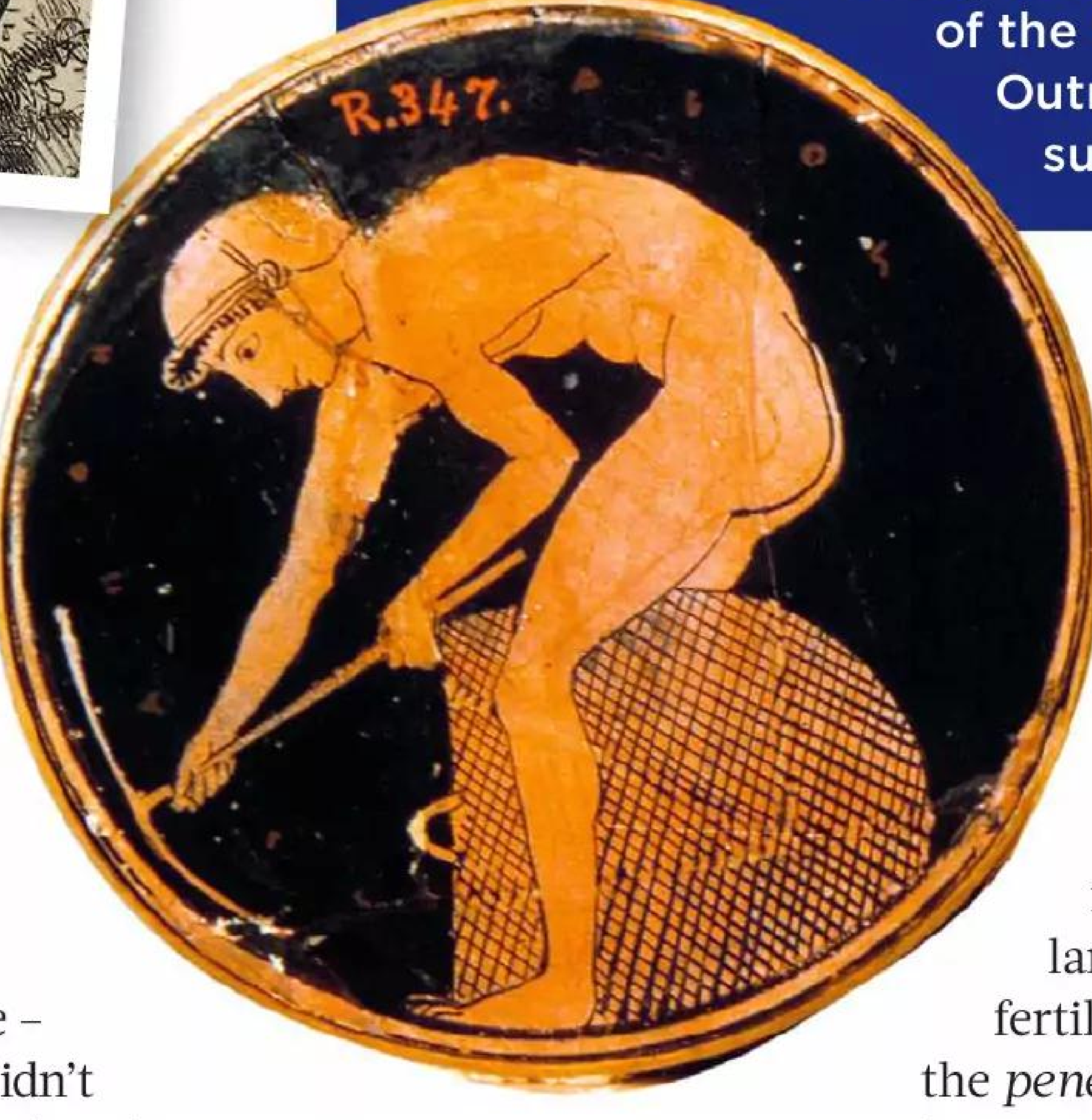


The helots found themselves subject to regular beatings from the Spartans, making sure they "never forgot" they were slaves

The helots were an enslaved group living in the Spartan regions of Laconia and Messenia. Being collectively owned by the state rather than the possessions of individual masters, to what extent helots were subjugated rather than enslaved is disputed. While the Athenian author and statesman Critias determined that helots were "slaves to the utmost", helots led a relatively stable domestic life, much less likely to see their family members sold off, unlike enslaved people elsewhere in ancient Greece. And they could prosper, too. Thanks to the region's agriculturally rich lands, financially comfortable lives were possible, once their tribute to the state had been paid in the form of a portion of their harvests. In 223 BC, around 6,000 helots coughed up the not-inconsiderable sum of 500 drachmas apiece to buy their freedom.

Helots were widespread and large in number. In the fifth century BC, Herodotus wrote of the helot population being seven times that of the Spartans. Outnumbered to such an extent, it was incumbent of the Spartans, for their own self-preservation, to keep the helots under control and to quell the merest sniff of rebellion. Plutarch wrote that the Spartans treated them "harshly and cruelly", while Thucydides observed that "most Spartan institutions have always been designed with a view to security against the helots". Also, as Myron of Priene noted, the helots were subject to "a stipulated number of beatings every year, regardless of any wrongdoing, so that they never forgot they were slaves". Every autumn, the Spartans declared war on the helots, meaning that a proportion of them could be slaughtered without any censure from religious institutions.

This wasn't to say that helot rebellions didn't occur – after all, Aristotle called them "an enemy constantly sitting in wait" – but the Spartan preoccupation with security largely prevailed, thanks to the ways of the *Krypteia*, their secret police. And, of course, the Spartans took full advantage of the helot population when filling the ranks of their troops for wars against other states.



An example of traditional Greek red-figure pottery, depicting an enslaved person working in a mine

and mines. Domestic slaves arguably had less physically demanding existences; some would accompany their masters on their travels, perhaps even being becoming informal confidantes. Enslaved people might also work in professional trades, perhaps as artisans or shopkeepers or bankers. These – known as *chôris oikountes* – didn't actually live under their masters' roofs, but did work on their behalf, and paid them a commission. Their lives would, unsurprisingly, not be as harsh as those forced into heavy manual labour every day.

So, just as there was great variety in the nature of the work undertaken, when it came to status, being an enslaved person in ancient Greece was by no means a uniform experience either; there was no neat slave/non-slave binary distinction. Several shades of grey existed. For instance, enslaved people in Sparta were known as helots (*pabox, above*), a group that, at least in the eyes of the scholar Pollux, occupied a status "between free men and slaves". In the region of Thessaly, the closest equivalent to helots were *penestae* who, like their Spartan counterparts, were tied to the land they inhabited. While their status was similar to serfs in later medieval times, the land of Thessaly was notably fertile and uncrowded, ensuring the *penestae* could comfortably pay the proportion of their produce due to their masters. The third-century BC writer Archemachus even claimed that "many of them are richer than their masters".

### FINDING A WAY OUT

Enslaved people who lived and largely worked independently of their masters were those least likely to feel the iron rod of discipline. Athenian slaves, too, could be physically punished and even tortured, and enslaved people elsewhere were also subject to beatings. As the statesman and intellectual Demosthenes argued, "the body of a slave is made responsible for all his misdeeds, whereas corporal punishment is the last penalty to inflict on a free man".

While most enslaved people remained in servitude until death, it was possible to be freed by a master – the process of manumission, or enfranchisement. In all but the most benevolent of cases, an enslaved person effectively had to buy their way to freedom for this to happen, paying their master a sum that at least equated to their value were they to be sold off to a new master. If the slave had sufficient savings to be able to do this, their emancipation was likely to be total, meaning they couldn't be enslaved again at any point in the future.

But if, as was distinctly likely, the enslaved person didn't have access to sufficient funds, they might request a so-called 'friendly' loan from their master. In these circumstances, it was probable that they would still have to fulfil particular obligations to their former master until the loan had been repaid. That is, emancipation would only be partial. Completely escaping the control of a master was an ambition seldom realised. ⊙

**WORDS: NIGE TASSELL**

# IN SICKNESS AND HEALTH

## Ancient Greece saw the birth of modern medicine, as physicians began to seek a more scientific approach

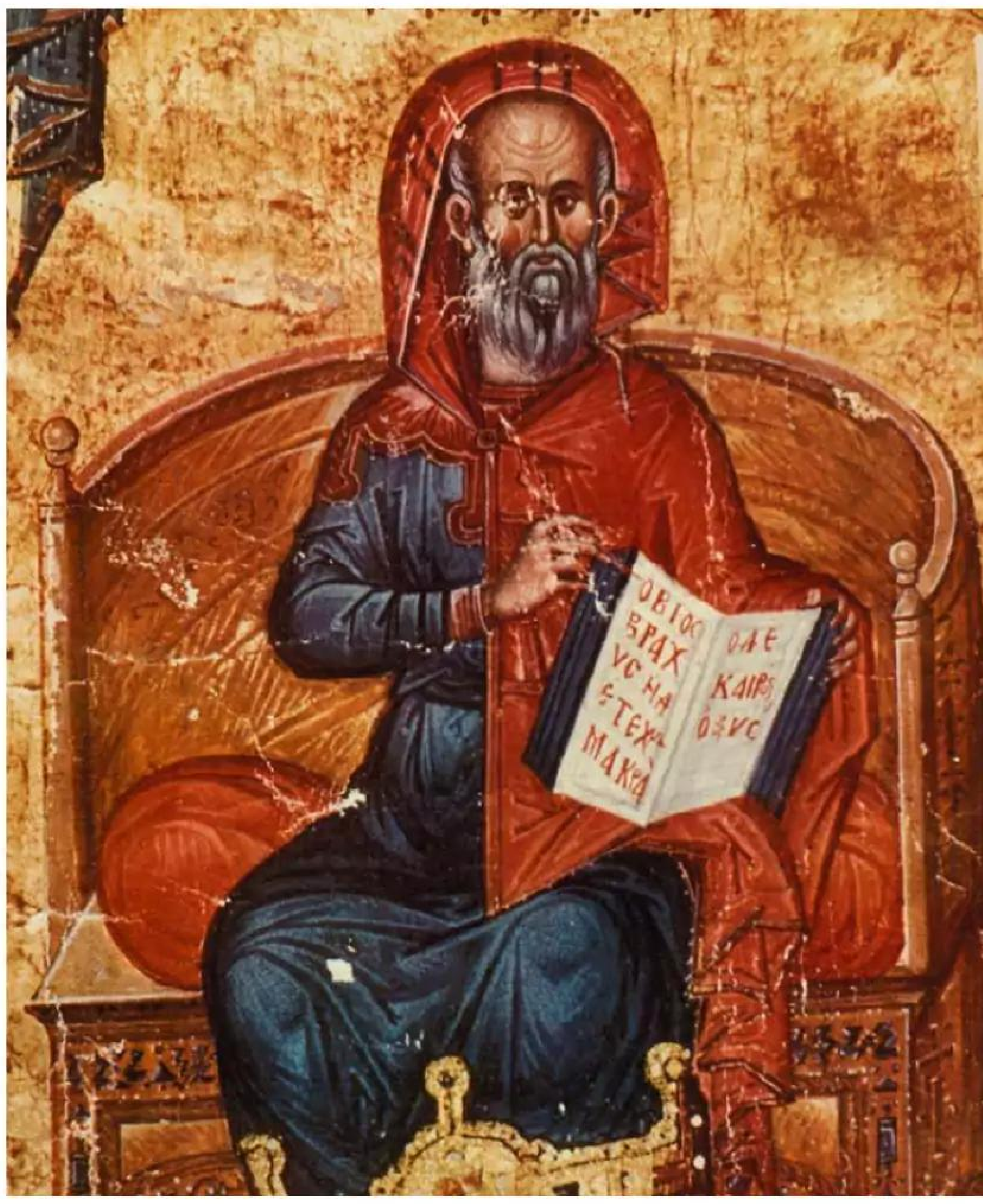
Early Greek medicine borrowed numerous ideas from ancient Egypt, with many people seeking supernatural explanations for their ailments, such as curses and the judgment of the gods. If someone became unwell, they would typically end up in an *asclepeion* – a temple dedicated to the god of medicine, Asclepius. The patient would sleep there and hope to be visited by Asclepius overnight, who would tell them their cure.

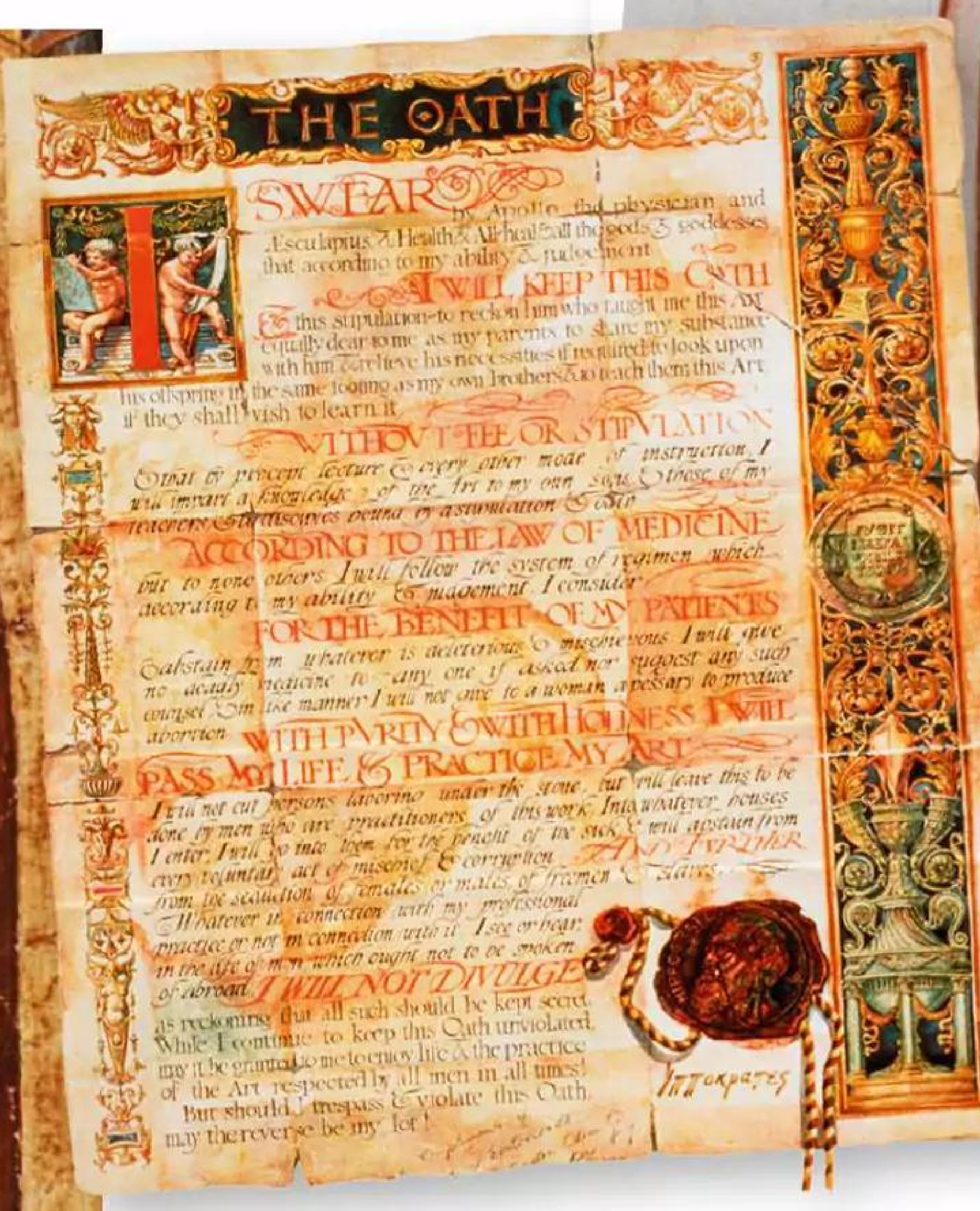
Upon waking the next day, the patient would report their dreams to priests, who would prescribe them a treatment – usually based on prayer, exercise, bathing and herbal remedies. If they were cured, the grateful worshippers would leave behind a model of their affected body part in the temple as an offering of thanks.

However, a desire to seek more pragmatic explanations for people's ailments grew as time went on. One of the most notable physicians to advocate science and reason was Hippocrates (c460–c375 BC), who helped further the theory of the four humours (*see box on opposite page*), and was one of the first doctors to accurately describe conditions such as epilepsy. Whereas some people believed that the disorder was a result of demonic possession, the Kos-born physician instead determined that the cause lay inside the human brain.

Thanks to the work of Hippocrates and his adherents down the generations, distinctions now also began to be made between acute (short and sudden) and chronic (long-lasting) diseases, while emphasising the importance of observation. Physicians would also regularly take checks of their patient's progressing symptoms, as well as their pulse, temperature and excretions.

In addition, the Hippocratic school pioneered important new techniques: a collection of writings attributed to the physician's followers (known as the *Hippocratic Corpus*) features the earliest known reference to an endoscopy using a rectal speculum.





THE OATH

I SWEAR by Apollo the physician and Æsculapius & Health & All-heal & all the gods & goddesses that according to my ability & judgement

I WILL KEEP THIS OATH

& this stipulation—to reckon him who taught me this Art equally dear to me as my parents to share my substance with him & relieve his necessities if required to look upon his offspring in the same footing as my own brothers & to teach them this Art if they shall wish to learn it

WITHOUT FEE OR STIPULATION

& that by precept lecture & every other mode of instruction I will impart a knowledge of the Art to my own sons & those of my teachers & to disciples bound by a stipulation & oath

ACCORDING TO THE LAW OF MEDICINE

but to none others I will follow the system of regimen which according to my ability & judgement I consider

FOR THE BENEFIT OF MY PATIENTS

& abstain from whatever is deleterious & mischievous I will give no deadly medicine to any one if asked nor suggest any such counsel & in like manner I will not give to a woman a pessary to produce abortion

WITH PURITY & WITH HOLINESS I WILL PASS MY LIFE & PRACTICE MY ART

I will not cut persons labouring under the stone but will leave this to be done by men who are practitioners of this work Into whatever houses I enter I will go into them for the benefit of the sick & will abstain from every voluntary act of mischief & corruption AND FURTHER from the seduction of females or males of freemen & slaves

Whatever in connection with my professional practice or not in connection with it I see or hear in the life of men which ought not to be spoken of abroad I WILL NOT DIVULGE as reckoning that all such should be kept secret

While I continue to keep this Oath unviolated may it be granted to me to enjoy life & the practice of the Art respected by all men in all times! But should I trespass & violate this Oath may the reverse be my lot!

Ιπποκρατης

ABOVE LEFT: **An image of Hippocrates from the 14th century. The Greek physician has been dubbed the 'Father of Medicine'**

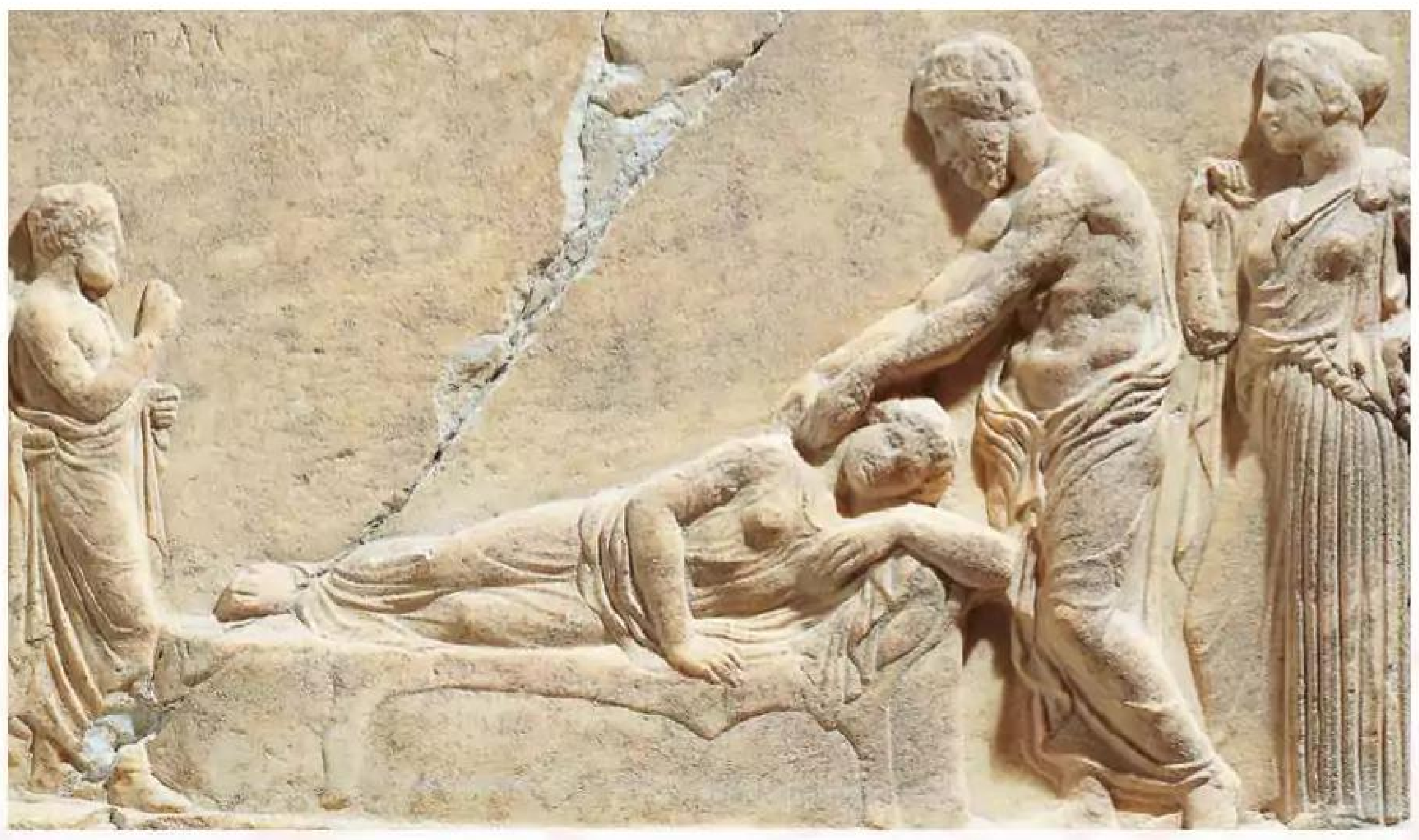
ABOVE RIGHT: **The Hippocratic Oath still influences the conduct of doctors today**

### PROFESSIONAL METHODS

As medicine was still a developing field, physicians were often viewed with suspicion. Hippocrates, however, developed a code of ethics that helped turn medicine into a respected profession, and ensured that physicians came to be seen as important members of society. The so-called 'Hippocratic Oath' laid out basic ground rules for a doctor's bedside manner, as well as text on the importance of honesty, compassion, confidentiality, cleanliness, and careful noting of a patient's symptoms (which could then be used by other physicians). Indeed, more than 2,300 years after Hippocrates' death, much of the oath still resonates today:

*I swear by Apollo the physician, and Asclepius, and Hygieia and Panacea and all the gods and goddesses as my witnesses, that, according to my ability and judgment, I will keep this Oath and this contract… I will use those dietary regimens which will benefit my patients according to my greatest ability and judgment, and I will do no harm or injustice to them… Into whatever homes I go, I will enter them for the benefit of the sick, avoiding any voluntary act of impropriety or corruption, including the seduction of women or men, whether they are free men or slaves.*

*Whatever I see or hear in the lives of my patients, whether in connection with my professional practice or not, which ought not to be spoken of outside,*



**A fifth-century BC marble relief shows a Greek physician treating a woman**

GETTY IMAGES X6

*I will keep secret, as considering all such things to be private.*

*So long as I maintain this Oath faithfully and without corruption, may it be granted to me to partake of life fully and the practice of my art, gaining the respect of all men for all time. However, should I transgress this Oath and violate it, may the opposite be my fate.*

While Hippocrates is perhaps the most famous of the ancient Greek physicians, he certainly wasn't the only doctor to have had an important impact on medical thinking. Herophilus (c330–c280 BC), for instance, is believed to have been one of the first to perform human dissections during a time when a ban on the practice (for religious reasons) was temporarily lifted in Alexandria. Through his careful studies of the body, Herophilus deduced that veins only carried blood (it was previously thought they also carried a mixture of water and air), and devised a method for measuring the pulse.

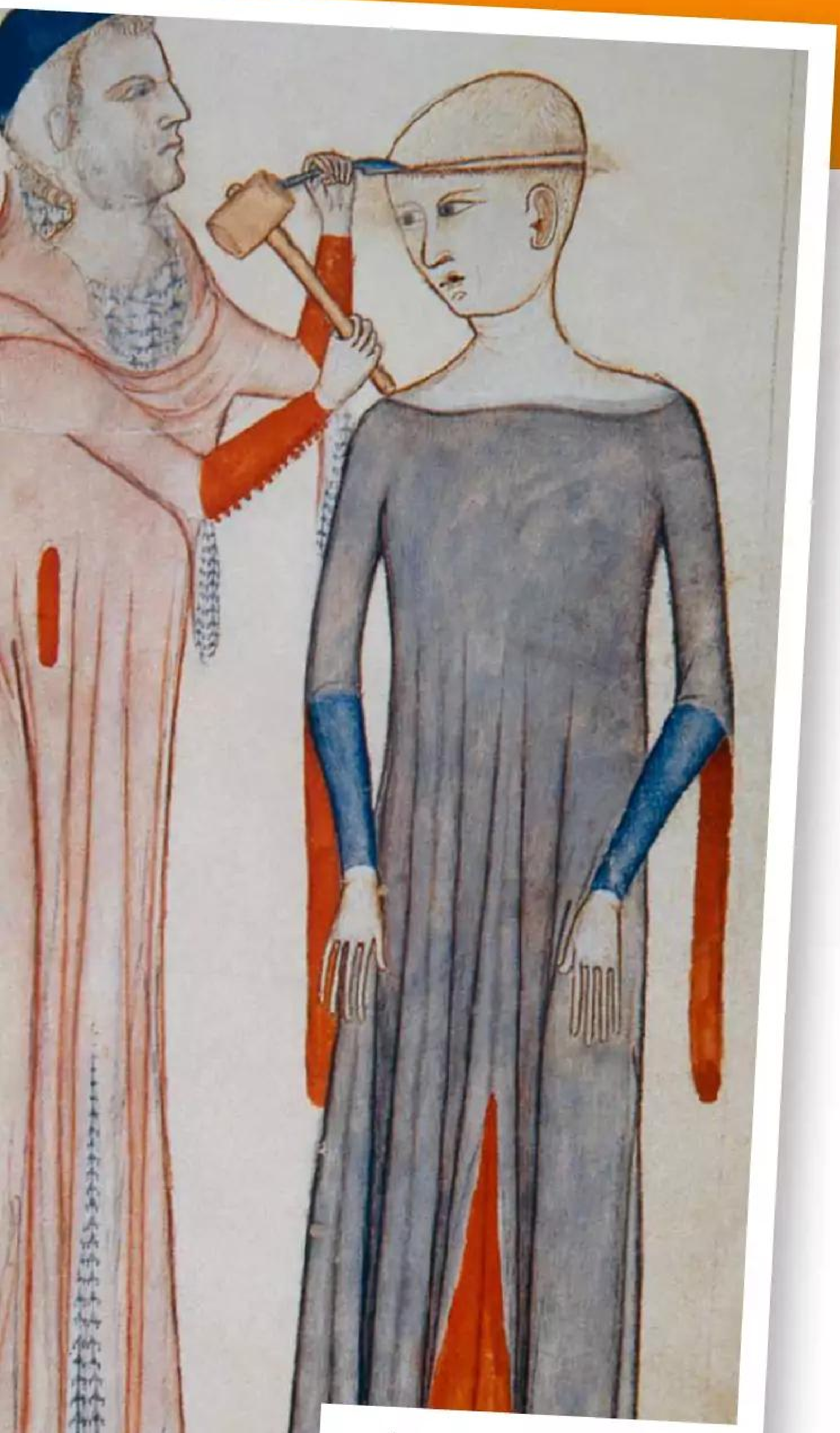
## A FERTILE IMAGINATION

Despite their pioneering ideas, the ancient Greeks still had some unusual beliefs when it came to conditions like pregnancy, including the notion that a baby's gender could be determined through the complexion of the mother – the appearance of freckles was thought to be a sign that she was carrying a girl, while a clear complexion indicated that a boy was due instead. Meanwhile, if a couple wanted to increase the likelihood of having a boy, the man could tie up his left testicle before intercourse; according to contemporary thinking, the right testicle was believed to be 'superior' and would therefore conceive a stronger (and more desirable) male heir.

Another medical technique that the ancient Greeks utilised was trepanation – drilling a hole into the skull. While earlier civilisations may have adopted the procedure to allow evil spirits to escape, it's possible that Greek physicians had other ideas as to the benefits of the procedure. According to some historians, trepanation may have been used as a way of treating head fractures, on the basis that recovery was more likely if pieces of dead bone could be removed before infection set in.

Regardless of how strange some of their methods may seem today, however, the work of ancient Greek physicians had an undeniable impact on the western world. The teachings of ancient Greece were adopted by ancient Rome, and – as the Roman empire expanded – those ideas spread further afield. Together, they would influence medicine for many centuries to come. ⊙

**WORDS: EMMA SLATTERY WILLIAMS**



A 14th-century depiction of trepanation – a treatment also practised in ancient Greece

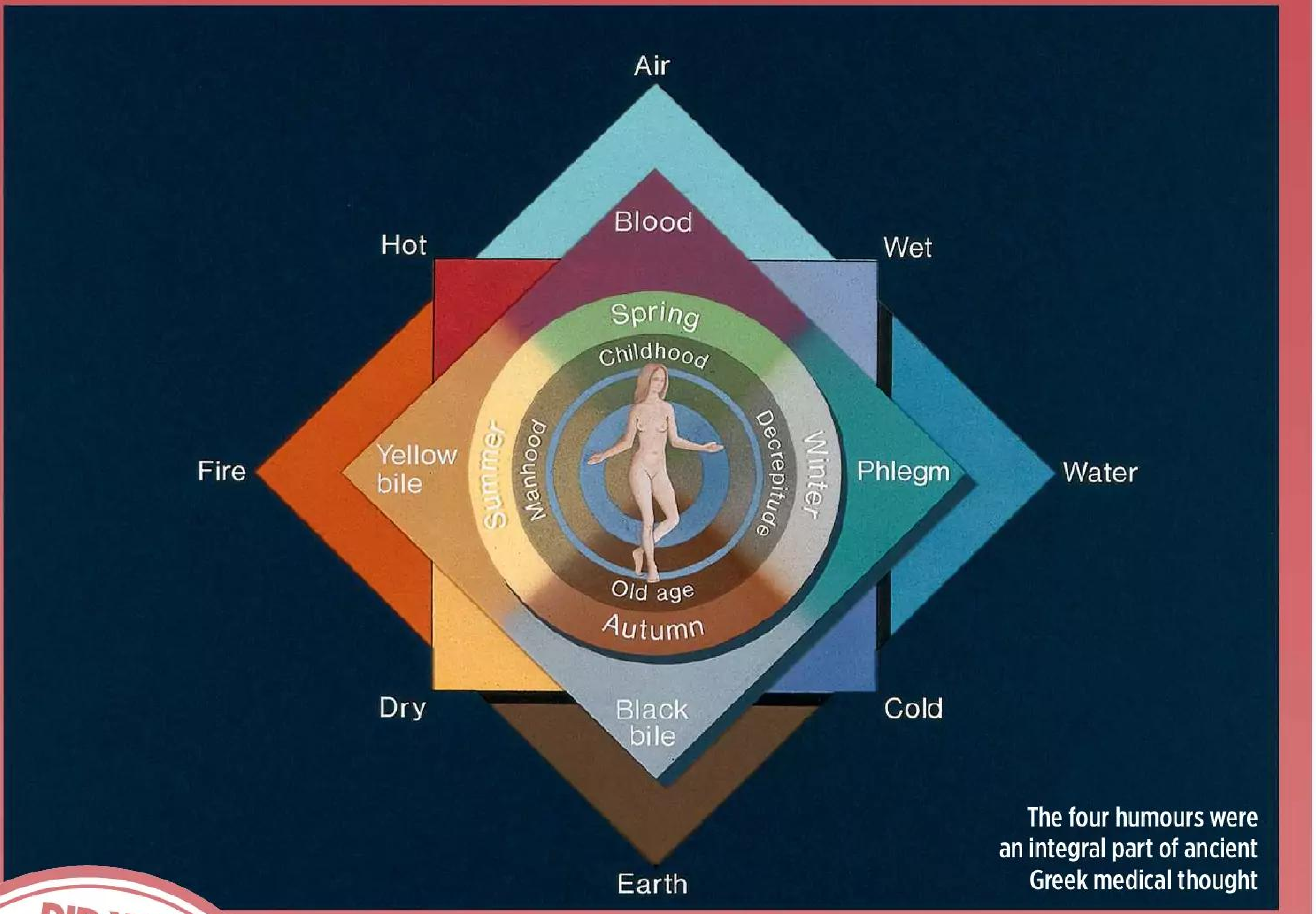
## THE FOUR HUMOURS

### While it seems bizarre through a modern lens, one medical concept popularised by the ancient Greeks would dominate for centuries

Humourism, or the theory of the four humours, was a prevalent concept in ancient Greece. Though the theory is believed to have originated much earlier, Hippocrates is often credited with refining and popularising it. The core belief was that the human body was made up of four fluids – blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm – and that these corresponded with the four elements of earth, fire, wind and water. If any of these became imbalanced, you could become ill.

The humours were also believed to be connected with temperature and weather. Blood was associated with moisture and warmth; if you suffered from redness, perspiration and swelling, you were said to have too much blood in your body. To solve the problem, doctors would practise bloodletting, achieved by cutting the skin or by using leeches. Fainting was usually seen as a sign that the treatment was working, but death could occur if too much blood was drained.

The four humours theory did not die out with the ancient Greeks. In fact, humourism would remain part of western medicine until as late as the 19th century, when germ theory (the idea that pathogens cause disease) and other medical discoveries took hold.

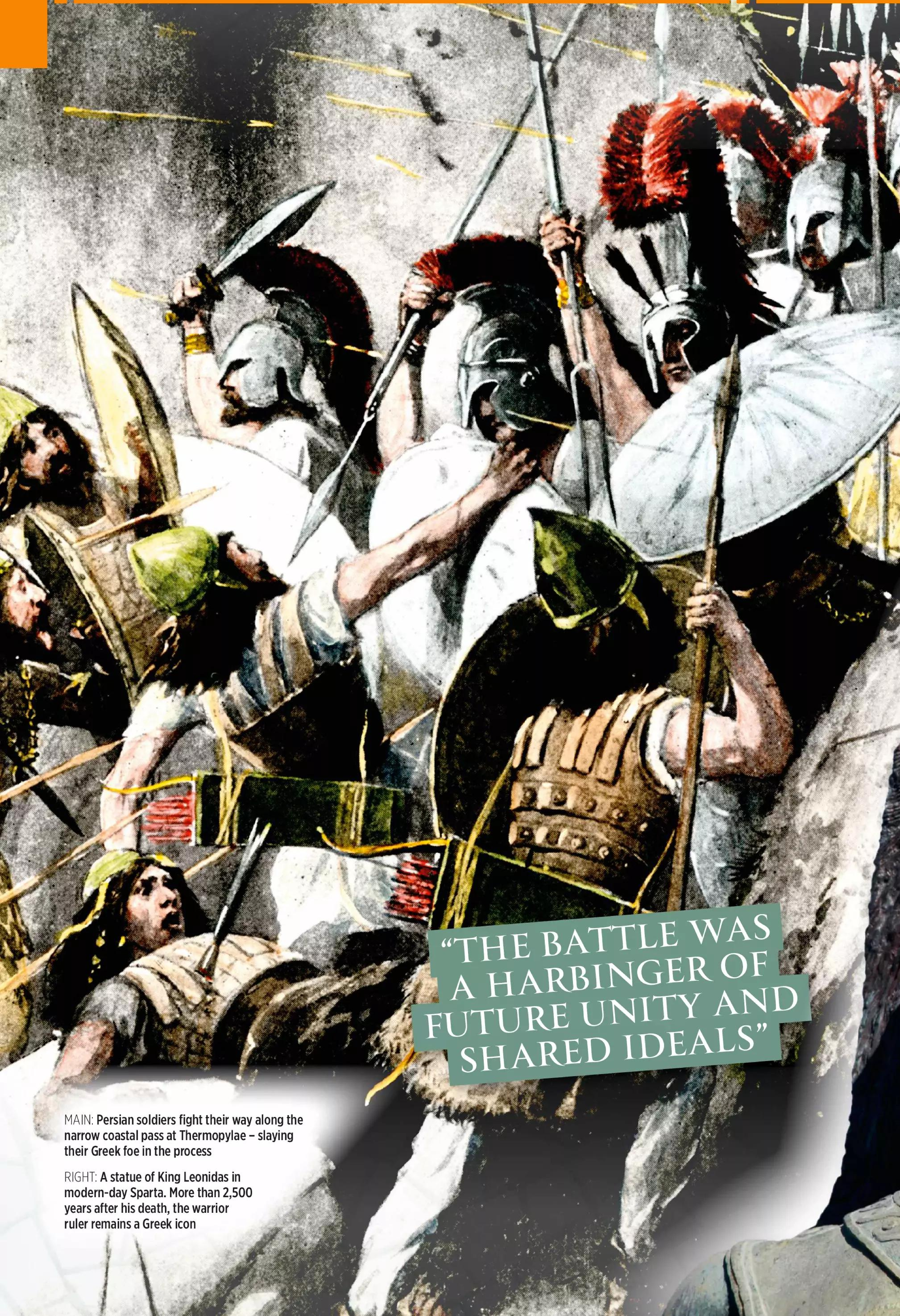


The four humours were an integral part of ancient Greek medical thought

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**ALL GREEK TO ME**

The image of the Rod of Asclepius – a serpent-entwined staff – is still used as a symbol for healthcare and healing across the globe. It famously appears on the flag of the World Health Organization.



“THE BATTLE WAS A HARBINGER OF FUTURE UNITY AND SHARED IDEALS”

MAIN: **Persian soldiers fight their way along the narrow coastal pass at Thermopylae – slaying their Greek foe in the process**

RIGHT: **A statue of King Leonidas in modern-day Sparta. More than 2,500 years after his death, the warrior ruler remains a Greek icon**

# LEONIDAS AND THE BATTLE OF THERMOPYLAE

## It was a spectacular defeat – but ancient Greece's greatest clash would go on to symbolise heroism for generations to come

The battle of Thermopylae holds a significant place in Greek history. Although events were grave for the country's troops, and it was a defeat that was almost inevitable, the battle was also a harbinger of future unity, of shared ideals, and of a growing devotion to a bigger cause.

In 490 BC, the first Persian invasion of Greece had come to an end following the invaders' defeat at the battle of Marathon, a loss that brought the expansionist ambitions of Darius the Great to a close. After his death in 486 BC, Xerxes I – not the eldest of Darius' sons but the one he had chosen to succeed him – resurrected these plans to conquer Greece. During the first six years of his rule, Xerxes assembled a huge military force, both in terms of army and naval manpower, and in 480 BC, he launched a second invasion, aiming to succeed where his father had failed 10 years earlier.

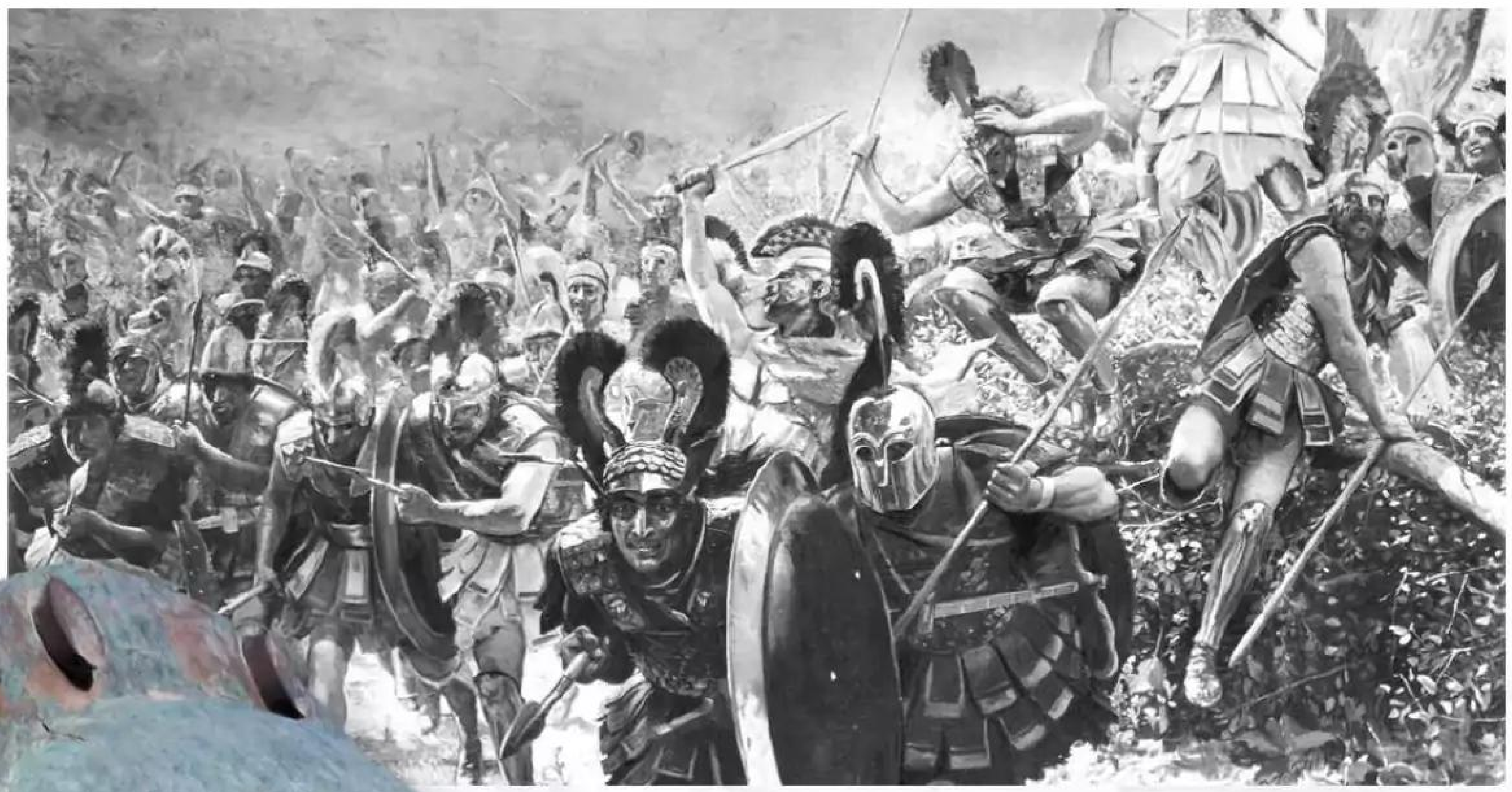
Fearful of such an invasion, the previous year a congress had been held at which, in the face of this seemingly inevitable Persian aggression, around 30 Greek city-states agreed to form an alliance, led by King Leonidas I of Sparta. The Spartans and the Athenians were prime movers of this union and took charge of the combined military forces; the Spartans controlled the army, while the navy – if not officially – was effectively run by the prominent Athenian politician Themistocles.

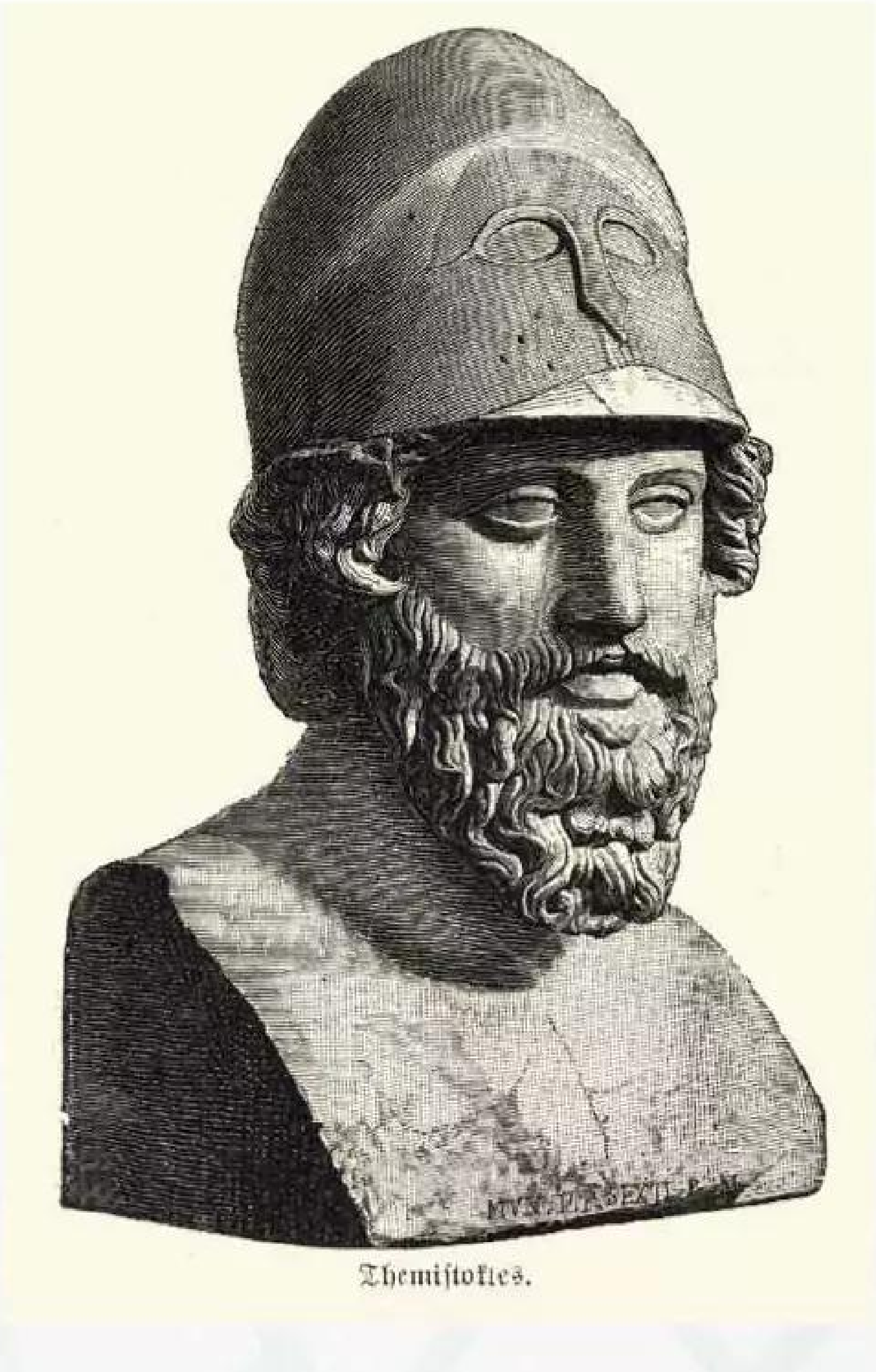
It was Themistocles who masterminded the allies' key plan of defence. He suggested that the Greeks' combined land forces should aim to block the Persians' progress at the coastal pass of Thermopylae. At the same time, his ships would attempt to contain the invading advance in the tight Straits of Artemisium. Accordingly, the 7,000-strong Greek army marched north towards Thermopylae.

### CUT TO RIBBONS

Subsequent retellings of the events at Thermopylae make frequent reference to the tight dimensions of the east/west pass, a route apparently so narrow that it could only accommodate a single cart or chariot at one time. The pass was no more than 15 metres wide, even in the middle, and largely consisted of treacherous marshland, across which a narrow pass offered the only means of progress. The Malian Gulf was to the north and a seemingly insurmountable hill to the south. The topography certainly favoured the Greeks, who were further aided by the pass being protected by a series of gates erected the previous century by the Phocians as a means of

▶





ABOVE: **Persia's first invasion of Greece had come to an end at Marathon in 490 BC** RIGHT: **Politician Themistocles organised the main defence strategy at Salamis**

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X2

# BIG NUMBERS

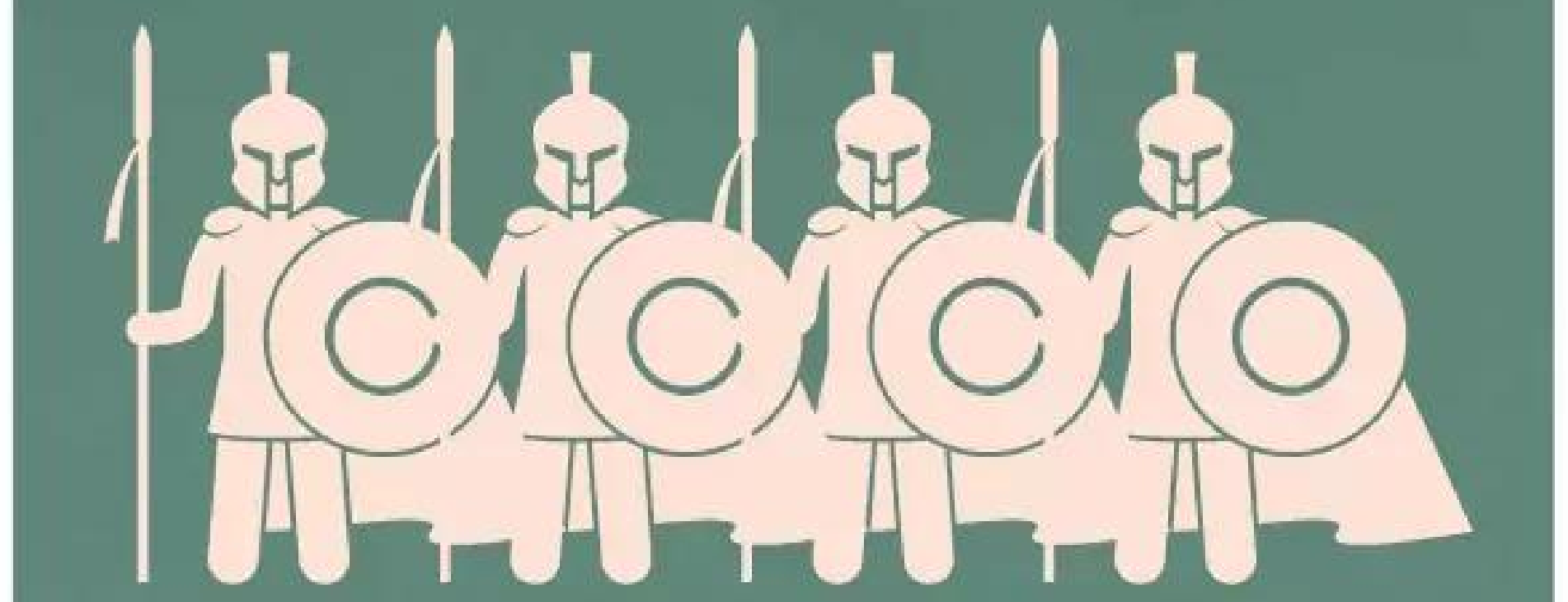
Vital statistics from one of the most iconic battles of the ancient world...

**3 MILLION**

The size, in square kilometres, of the Persian empire at the time of its second invasion of Greece in 480 BC

**5,283,220**

The number of Persian soldiers and support personnel at the battle, as calculated by the contemporary writer Herodotus. The more realistic figure is closer to 200,000 soldiers



**15**

How many metres wide the navigable part of the Thermopylae pass was

**20,000**

The estimated number of Persian soldiers killed in the three days of fighting

**2,000**

The estimated number of Greek soldiers killed in the three days of fighting

GETTY IMAGES X3, ALAMY X3, BBC X1

◀ defence. (Thermopylae literally means 'hot gates', a name that also referenced the nearby hot springs.)

When they arrived at Thermopylae, it was clear that the Persians vastly outnumbered the allied defence. That said, their forces were nothing close to the several million soldiers claimed by the contemporary writer Herodotus. More realistic estimates suggest the invaders were around 200,000 in number, a force that still dwarfed that of the Greek allies.

Despite their size, it wasn't until the fourth day after their arrival – in either August or September 480 BC – that the Persians began their assault on the blockade. This first attack came in the form of a barrage of arrows fired by 5,000 archers, which the Greeks comfortably defended; the historian Diodorus wrote about "the great size of their shields". Then came the first frontal attack, launched by a wave of around 10,000 men. It was far from successful. Thanks to their superior weaponry, the Greeks suffered very few casualties while the Persians were, in the words of the chronicler Ctesias, "cut to ribbons". Xerxes responded by sending in his elite force, the 10,000-strong Immortals. They fared no better.

## A SECRET PATHWAY

On the second day of hostilities, Xerxes sent in the infantry. The belief was that, as the fighting continued, his plentiful personnel would ultimately come to bear as he launched further waves of attacks. As Herodotus wrote, "they joined battle, supposing that their enemies, being so few, were now disabled by wounds and could no longer resist". But, again, the invaders were unable to penetrate the Greeks' defences. Xerxes withdrew his troops from the frontline, unsure and confused as to which tactic to employ next.

Then a godsend came his way when a local man, Ephialtes, fed him a morsel of insider information. It would be a morsel that abruptly changed the direction of the battle. Ephialtes revealed the existence of a path leading over the adjacent mountain, one only known and used by local shepherds, that would bypass the stand-off. The motivation for Ephialtes was a potentially sizeable reward from the Persian king. After all, this was valuable intelligence: using this path would give Xerxes, already in possession of that numerical advantage, a strategic edge too.

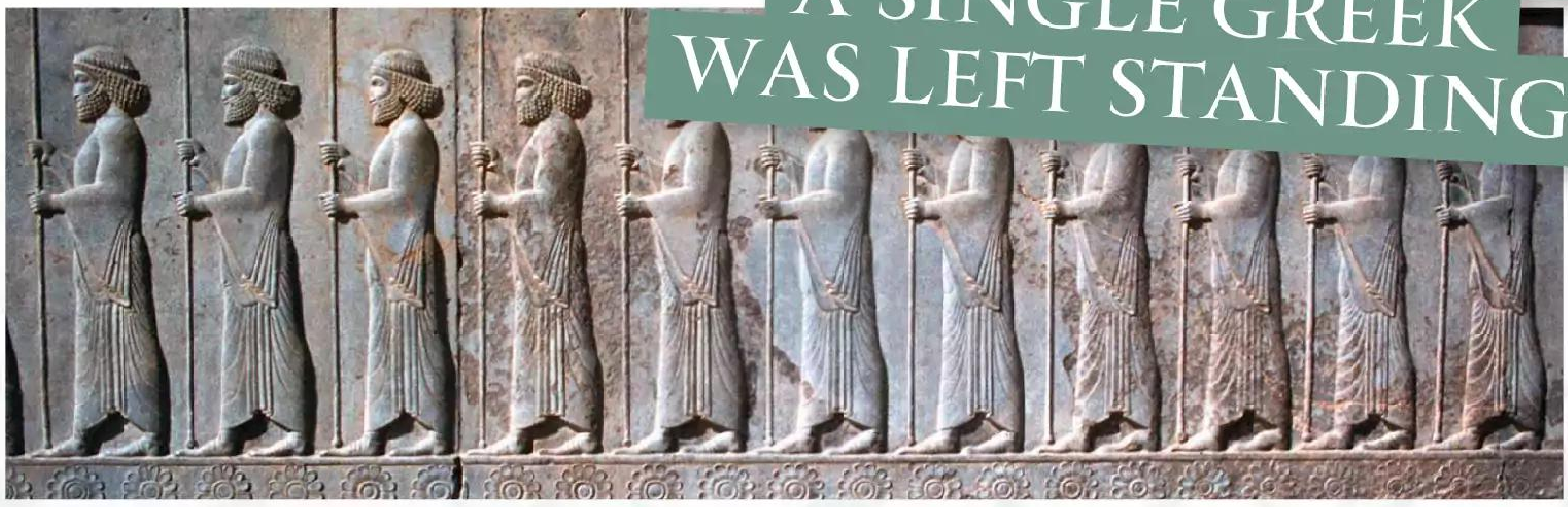
The local man's tip-off proved fatal for a couple of thousand allied Greek troops. On the evening of the battle's second day, Xerxes instructed his commander Hydarnes to take 10,000 Immortals on this lesser-used path, along the ridge of the tree-covered Mount Anopaea and down towards the Malian Gulf that lay beyond Thermopylae.

At daybreak the following morning, Phocian guards were alerted to the Persians' presence by a rustling in the trees. As Herodotus wrote, "the Phocians jumped up and began to put on their weapons, and in a moment the barbarians were there". With the secret path captured, the Persians marched on in their plan to surround the Greeks. Hearing that the Phocians had failed to keep the path secure, Leonidas swiftly called a council of war. While certain factions among the allies favoured a

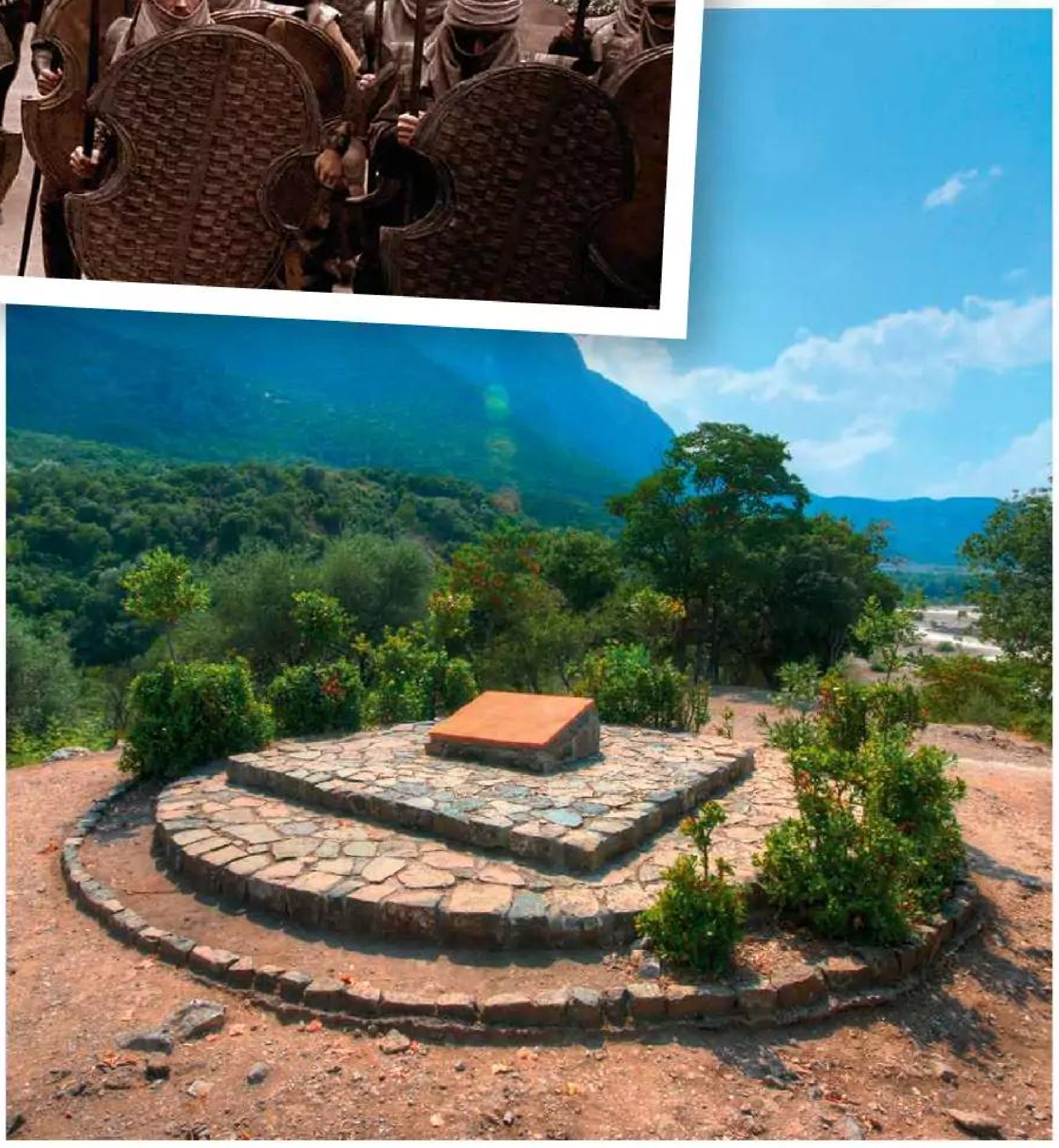
ABOVE: **A carving depicting the Persian king Xerxes I. While his troops were victorious at Thermopylae, his invasion of Greece would prove ultimately unsuccessful**

ABOVE RIGHT: **A still from Zack Snyder's 2006 film, *300*. The Hollywood blockbuster has been one of many efforts to bring the Spartans' heroics to the big screen**

> "THE ARCHERS ENSURED THAT NOT A SINGLE GREEK WAS LEFT STANDING"



**A relief showing some of Persia's 'Immortals' – an elite royal guard that, according to Herodotus, numbered precisely 10,000 men**



A tablet at the battle site commemorates Leonidas and his resilient Spartans

retreat, he announced that he and his 300 Spartans would remain firmly in place.

When word came through that the Greek rear guard had been encircled, Leonidas allowed his allies to leave if so desired. Many accepted the invitation and fled, but 2,000 soldiers held their positions. Further withdrawals followed – either voluntarily or under instruction from Leonidas – leaving 700 Thespians, 400 Thebans and those 300 Spartans to fight to the death.

## SPARTAN VALOUR

Ten thousand Persian light infantrymen and cavalry charged at the Greek troops who left their position on the narrow pass to meet their attackers head-on. Wide-scale loss of life was inevitable, but as they met their certain fate, they sought to take as many Persian casualties as possible. Two of Xerxes' brothers were killed in the fighting, as was Leonidas himself, the victim of an arrow. The Persian archers did their best to ensure that not a single Greek was left standing; the Thebans abandoned the fight at the end and are said to have surrendered.

After three days of fighting, the allies had lost around 2,000 men. Persian casualties were much heavier – perhaps as high as 20,000 – but Xerxes' forces had won the battle, unlocking the pass at Thermopylae and allowing his ambitions of conquering Greece to advance. The Persians then marched on Athens, which they razed to the ground, before being defeated at the battle of Salamis, a naval skirmish which ultimately resulted in Xerxes' retreat back to Asia. The second Persian invasion of Greece had lasted even less time than the original one.

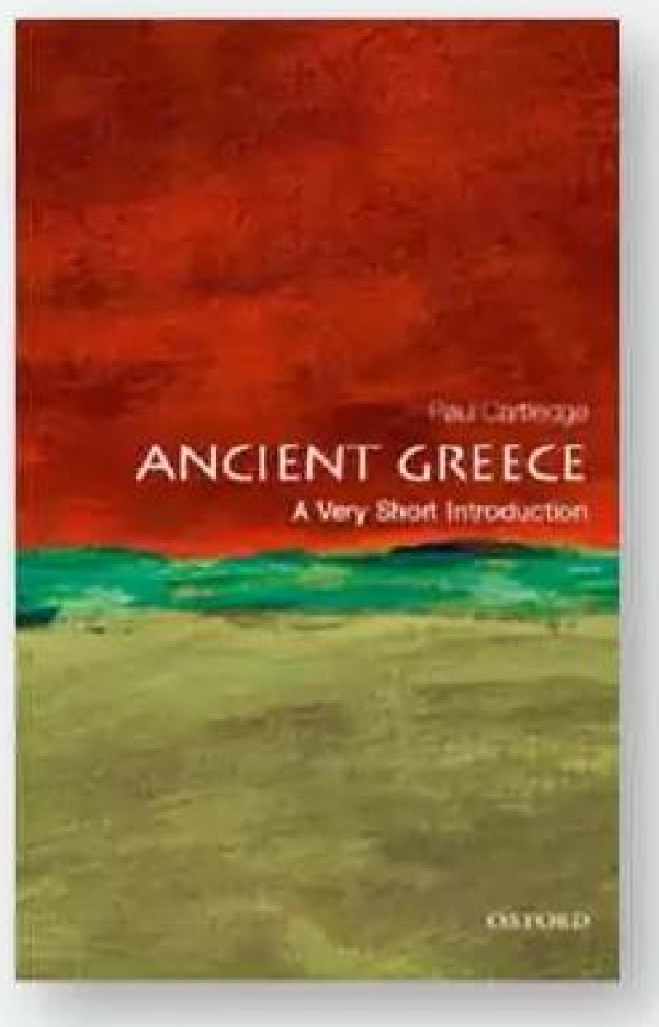
Arguably, the most enduring legacy of the battle of Thermopylae was the cultivation of the cult of Spartan valour. The honourable notion of surrendering yourself for the greater common good had firmly taken hold. As historian Paul Cartledge writes, the resistance undertaken at Thermopylae has "resonated indeed throughout the entire western cultural tradition as a deed emblematic of the peculiar Greek and Spartan qualities of reasoned devotion to, and self-sacrifice in the name of, a higher collective cause". Leonidas was its author. ⊙

**WORDS: NIGE TASSELL**

# GET HOOKED

If we've whetted your appetite for ancient Greece, why not explore the topic further with our pick of books, films and podcasts

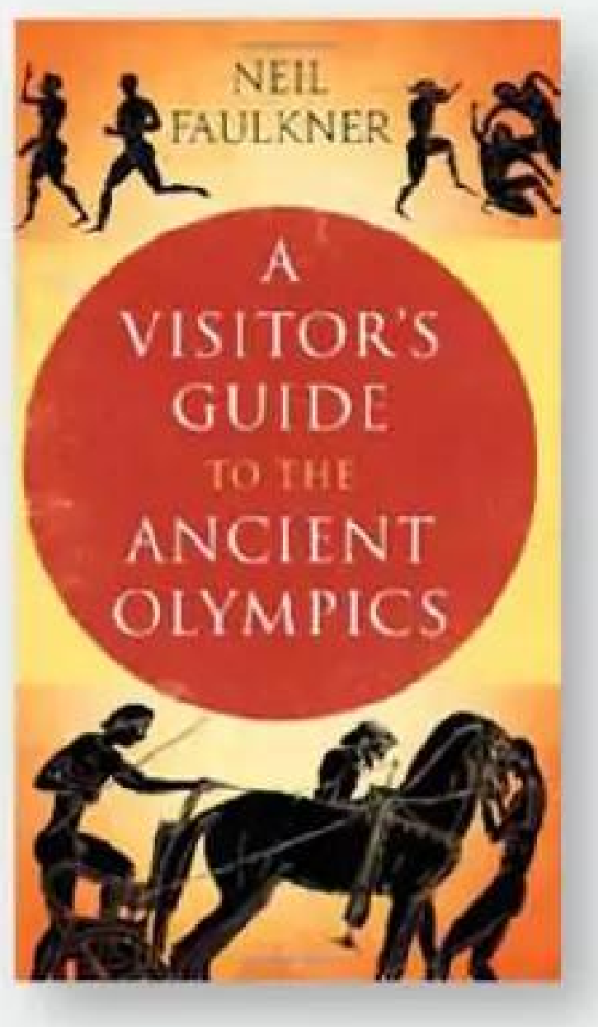
## BOOKS



### Ancient Greece: A Very Short Introduction

By Prof Paul Cartledge (OUP, 2011)

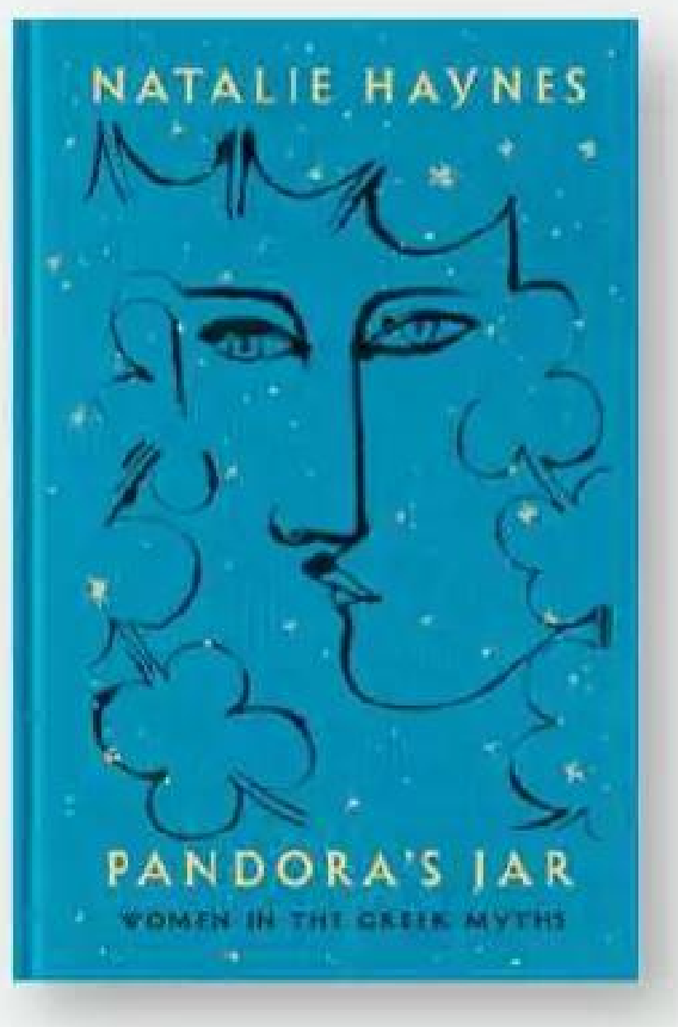
Covering everything from politics, trade and travel to slavery, gender, religion and philosophy, Professor Paul Cartledge uses the history of 11 major Greek cities to illuminate the most important and informative themes in ancient Greek history.



### A Visitor's Guide to the Ancient Olympics

By Dr Neil Faulkner (Yale University Press, 2012)

What was it like to attend the Olympics in 388 BC? Would the experience resemble Olympic festivals as we celebrate them today? Dr Neil Faulkner offers a complete tour of the Olympic site exactly as athletes and spectators found it – evoking the sights, sounds and smells of ancient Olympia.



### Pandora's Jar: Women in the Greek Myths

By Natalie Haynes (Picador, 2020)

Taking Pandora and her jar as a starting point, broadcaster, writer and classicist Natalie Haynes puts the women of the Greek myths – from Hera, Athena and Artemis, to Clytemnestra, Jocasta, Eurydice and Penelope – on equal footing with the menfolk whose stories are more commonly known.

## LISTEN

▶ **Natalie Haynes Stands Up for the Classics** *(BBC Radio 4):* Natalie Haynes takes a fresh look at the ancient world, creating stand-up routines about figures from ancient Greece and Rome. Listen at *bbc.co.uk/programmes/b077x8pc*

▶ **For podcasts, features, quizzes, interviews and more on ancient Greece, visit our website: *historyextra.com/period/ancient-greece***

## WATCH

### 300 (2006)

(Now streaming on various platforms)

This graphic retelling of the battle of Thermopylae sees Sparta's King Leonidas lead an alliance of Greek forces against the mighty Persian army of King Xerxes I.

### Ancient Greece: The Greatest Show on Earth (2013)

(BBC Four, now streaming on Amazon Prime)

Professor Michael Scott explores the history and influence of Athenian theatre in this three-part series, including the role of the Romans in preserving Greek drama.

Made Macedon's king at age 20, over the next 12 years Alexander's military genius would irrevocably change the course of history

DID YOU KNOW?

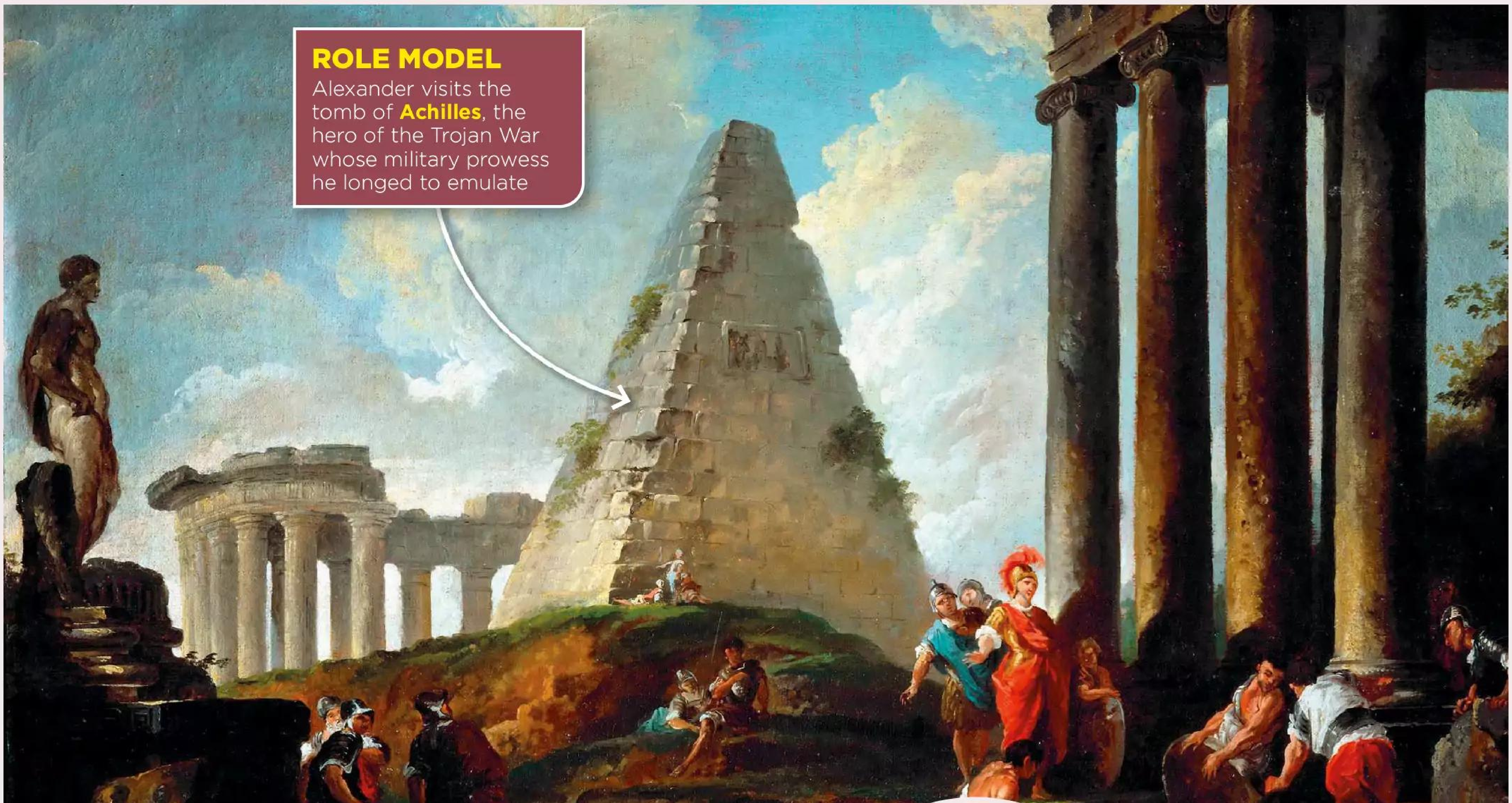
**OVERACHIEVER**

Although only 32 when he died, Alexander had conquered 2 million square miles, from Persia to the Punjab, including Anatolia, Egypt, Phoenicia, Syria, Gaza, Bactria and Mesopotamia.

# ALEXANDER THE GREAT

He was a military mastermind whose insatiable appetite for conquest built an empire that stretched across three continents. We trace the incredible life of Alexander the Great

ARCANGEL X2



**ROLE MODEL**
Alexander visits the tomb of **Achilles**, the hero of the Trojan War whose military prowess he longed to emulate

They must have made for a pitiful sight. On a cloudless day in early 332 BC, a small party of men staggered across the Saharan desert, seemingly heading for their deaths. They hadn't drunk for days, they were hopelessly lost and they were surrounded by a vast ocean of sand in every direction. But still their leader urged them on. He was, after all, a man on a mission.

Then the gods intervened. According to the historian Callisthenes, a sudden, violent rainstorm delivered the water the party so desperately craved, while two crows appeared in the sky and guided the men to their destination.

Against all the odds, the party's leader, Alexander the Great, would go on to fulfil his mission in the Saharan desert – to ask the oracle of the Siwa Oasis a question that had been troubling him for most of his life: "Am I the son of God?"

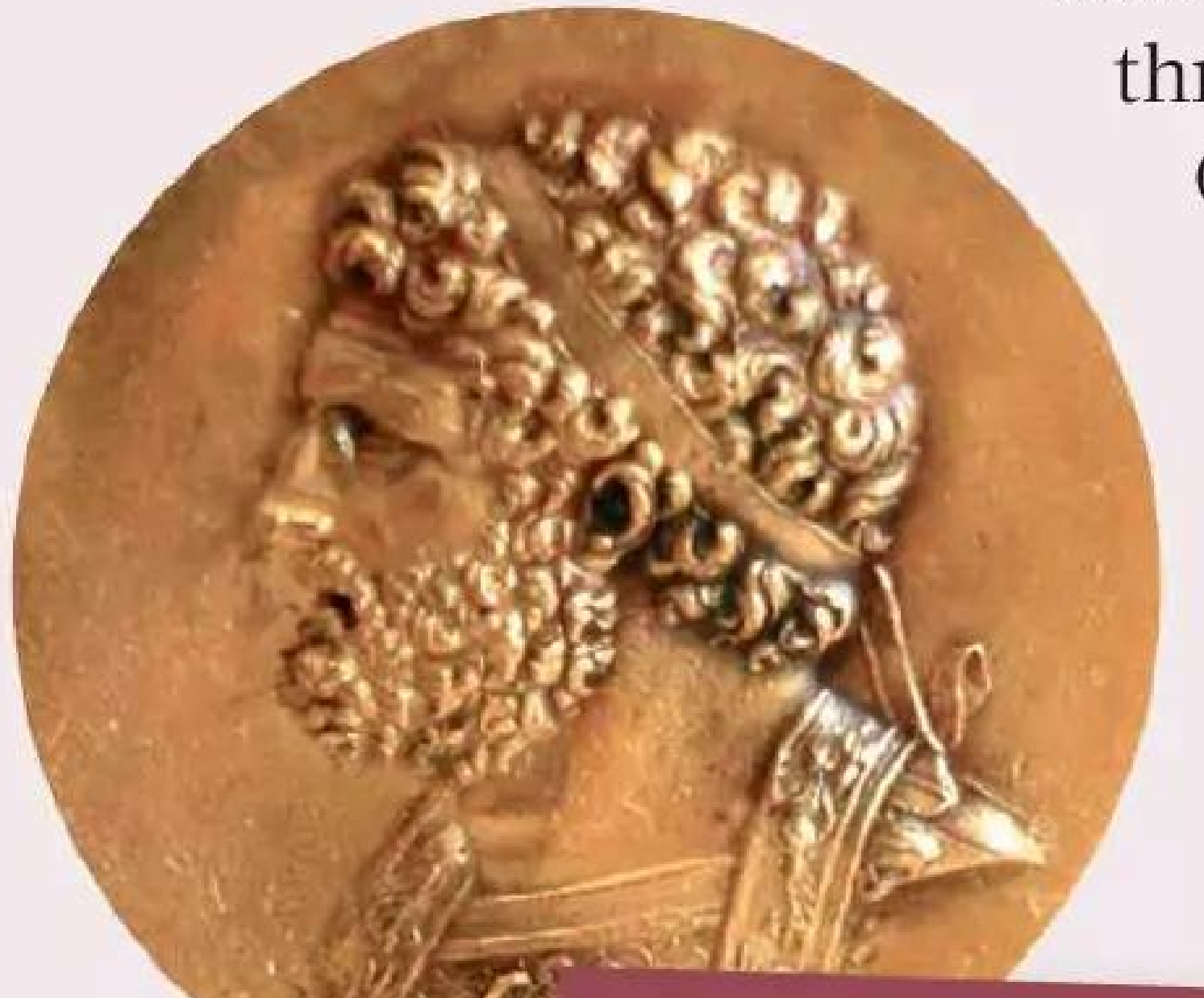
The oracle, we're told, answered in the affirmative – yes, Alexander *was* divine. Events would, of course, prove otherwise. Just nine years later, the mighty king of Macedon would die a slow, painful death, consigned to his grave by the tender age of 32. Yet in those 32 years, Alexander achieved feats way beyond the compass of most mortals. He led an army on a staggering 22,000-mile campaign into Asia and back, forging a colossal empire that took in modern-day nations such as Pakistan, Greece, India, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. He emerged victorious from every major battle he fought, humbling the known world's mightiest kingdoms. And, by spreading Greek thought and customs across his empire, he set the template for the religions and civilisations that would dominate the world for the next two millennia.

"No other single individual, either Greek or barbarian, has achieved such incredible success on so many occasions and to such an overwhelming extent," wrote the first-century AD Greek historian Arrian. And he was right. Alexander may not have been a god but, given his achievements, he can hardly be blamed for believing he was.

## LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

The iron will and military brilliance for which Alexander is famed seem to have been hard-wired into him from his birth in 356 BC. His father, King Philip II of Macedon, was a brilliant warlord who, in a few short years, turned his kingdom from a rag-tag collection of tribes into the dominant force in Greece. His mother, Olympias, was an eccentric, wilful, fanatically ambitious woman, who claimed that she had slept with the god Zeus. It seems that, from the moment Alexander was born, she dedicated her life to helping him become the most powerful man in the world.

**BORN WARRIOR** Alexander's mother Olympias (above), whose ambition was to make him a great leader; his father Philip II (below), the warlord who Alexander would ultimately view as a rival



OLYMPIAS DEDICATED HER LIFE TO HELPING ALEXANDER BECOME THE MOST POWERFUL MAN IN THE WORLD

Philip's might and wealth enabled him to secure Alexander the best education that money could buy – a three-year apprenticeship with the Greek philosopher Aristotle. This would have a huge impact on the young Alexander, for not only did it, in the words of the Greek biographer Plutarch, result in Alexander being devoted to "all

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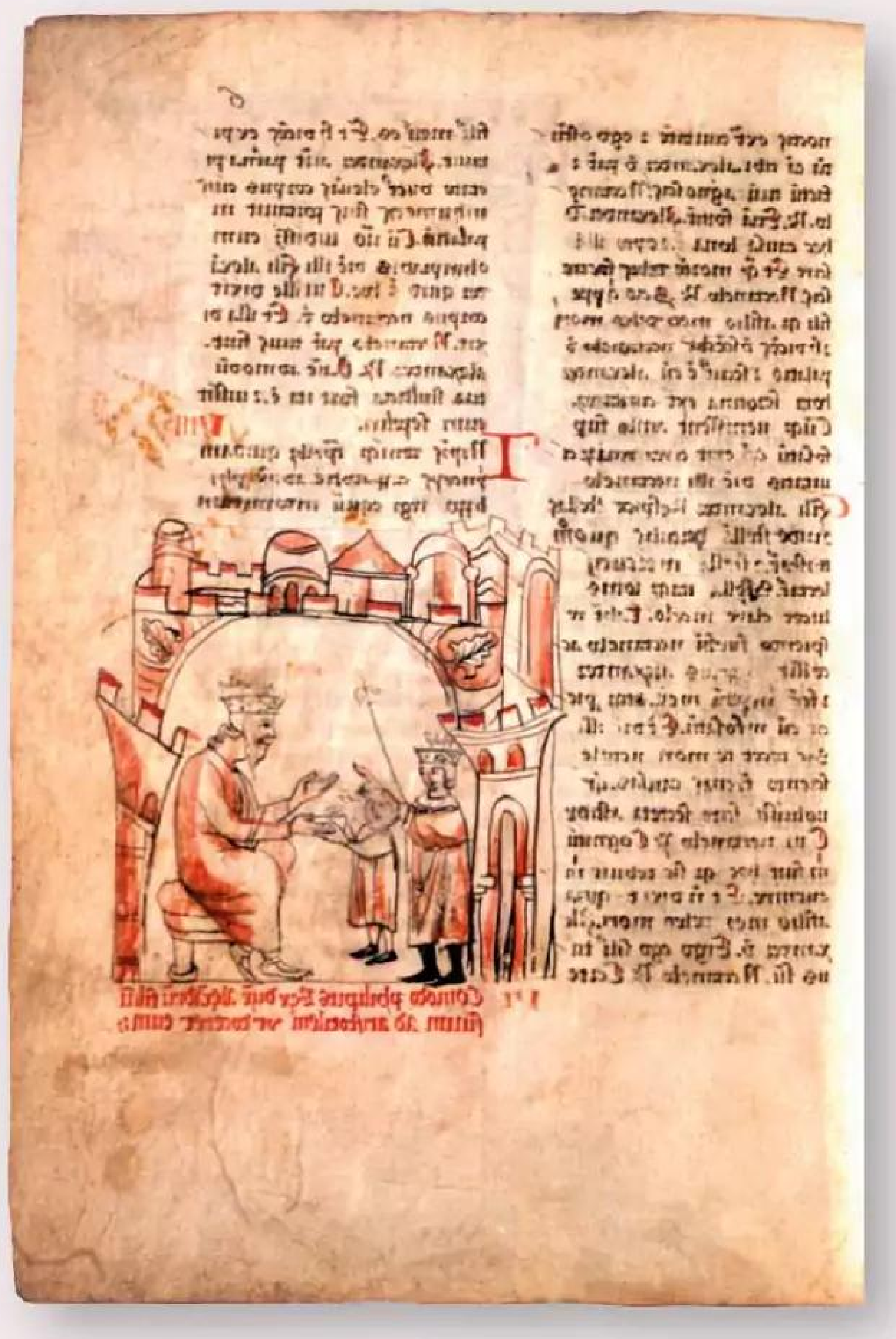


A 13th-century manuscript showing Philip entrusting the young Alexander to Aristotle, his tutor until age 16

kinds of learning, and a lover of books", it introduced him to the great mythic heroes of Greek culture – famed warriors such as Achilles. By the time Alexander returned from Aristotle's classroom to the Macedonian capital, Pella, he seems to have been burning with ambition to emulate their deeds.

But there was a problem, and that came from an unlikely source – his father. Alexander appears to have been ambivalent about Philip's military conquests. While he no doubt gloried in Macedon's expansion, Plutarch tells us that Alexander fretted that there would be no glory left for *him* to attain. When Philip left Olympias and fathered a rival son and heir with his new bride, Cleopatra, Alexander could see his future as a heroic warrior-king in the mould of Achilles being wrenched from his hands.

Such was Macedon's dominance of Greece that, by 336 BC, Philip could consider expanding his territory further still. In his sights was the Persian king Darius III, ruler of what was then the largest empire in history, stretching from the shores of eastern Europe to the Indus Valley in central Asia. Darius had been meddling in Greek affairs for years; Philip now decided it was payback time.

But just as Philip's campaign against Persia was getting under way, disaster struck. While attending marriage celebrations for his daughter, Cleopatra of

Continues on p94

## WHAT ALEXANDER LEFT BEHIND
## CULTURAL LEGACY

For centuries, historians and military strategists alike have extolled Alexander's genius as a soldier, and rightly so. But, for all that, perhaps his greatest impact on human history derives not from his brilliance as a commander but as a supreme cultural ambassador.

Alexander didn't simply wipe cities from the face of the Earth, before moving on to the next target – not all the time anyway. Instead, he left colonies of fellow Macedonians to administer conquered population centres, and they went about disseminating Greek methods of expression and thinking.

As a result, peoples from modern-day Turkey through Asia Minor all the way to India played Greek sports, watched Greek theatre, mimicked Greek art and adopted Greek scientific practices. In many cases, they continued to do so for centuries.

The cities of Ai Khanum in what is now Afghanistan and Philoteris in Egypt may have been separated by some 3,000 miles but they both boasted Greek gymnasiums. Ai Khanum was also home to an Acropolis, a theatre and library – a direct consequence of Alexander's extraordinary conquests.

Alexander's incursion into India was brief and bloody, but its impact on the subcontinent's culture was significant. It inspired the anthropomorphic representation of the Buddha in Indian sculpture and the appearance of Greek mythological figures, including Herakles, in Buddhist literature. It may even lie behind Indian astrologers' adoption of the signs of the zodiac.

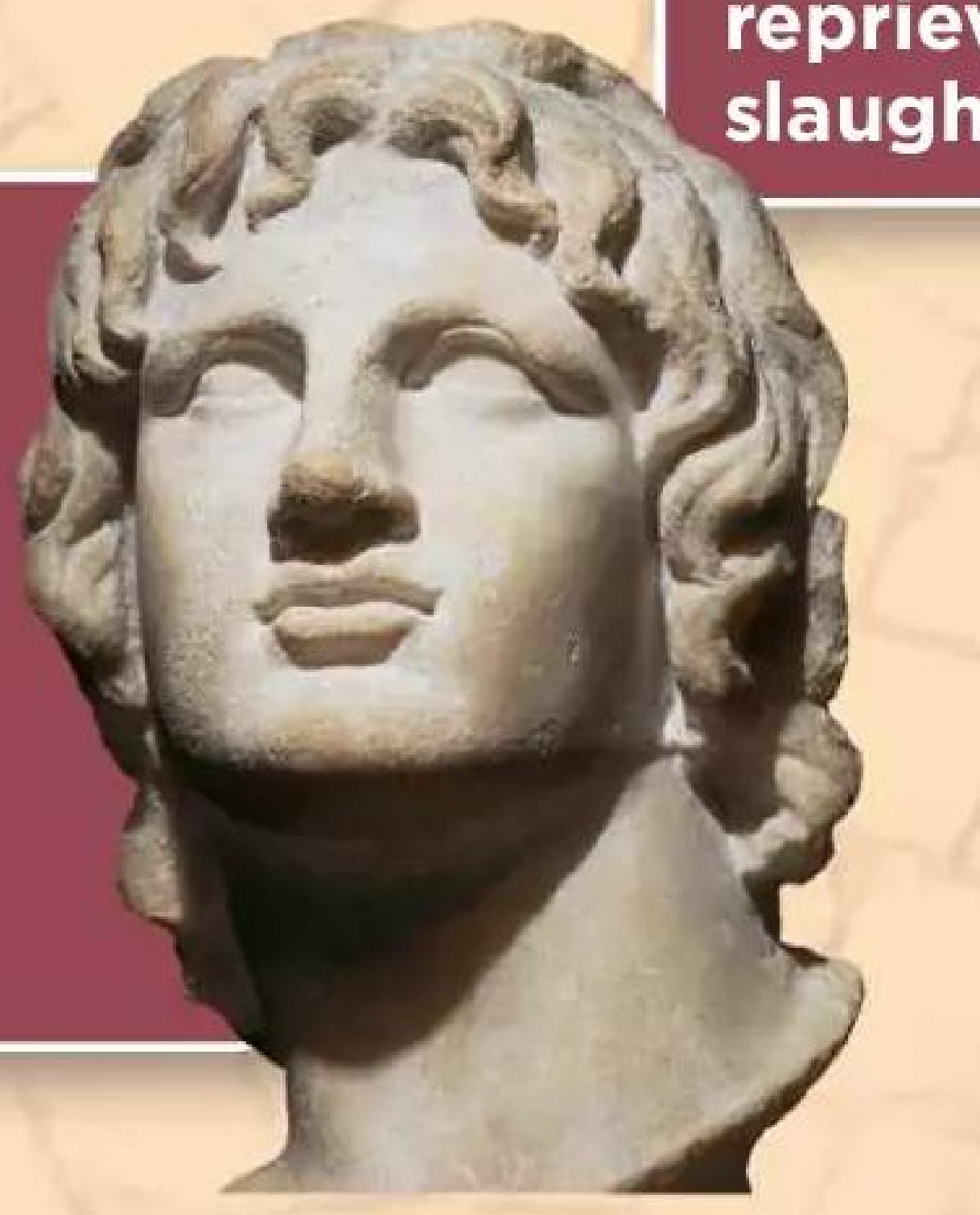
It seems that Alexander's cultural impact may even have spread beyond the borders of his massive empire, perhaps seeping into China. The theorem of Pythagoras reached the Chinese within decades of Alexander's death, and it's thought that the terracotta army may have been influenced by Greek models.

But perhaps Alexander's most enduring cultural legacy was the fact that, for a thousand years, Greek became the 'lingua franca' of the near east. As a result, when the Christian New Testament was first recorded, it was written down in Greek, the very language that Alexander had himself spoken hundreds of years earlier.

This c200 BC plate (left), found in Ai Khanum, shows the goddess Cybele, borrowed from the Greek tradition; Alexander's India campaign changed how the Buddha (above) was depicted

# THE EMPIRE OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT

Mapping his all-conquering domination from Egypt, through Asia and on to India



### 20/21 JULY 356 BC

Alexander the Great is born in the Macedonian capital of Pella. His father is the king of Macedon, Philip II, and his mother is the politically ambitious Olympias of Epirus.

### 343 BC

Alexander travels to the Temple of the Nymphs in Mieza to be educated by the celebrated Greek philosopher Aristotle. There he develops a fascination with the exploits of mythical Greek heroes such as Achilles.

### OCTOBER 336 BC

Philip II is assassinated by his bodyguard while attending wedding celebrations in Aegae. Alexander – who has since come under suspicion for ordering the killing – becomes king of Macedon in his father's stead.

### MAY 334 BC

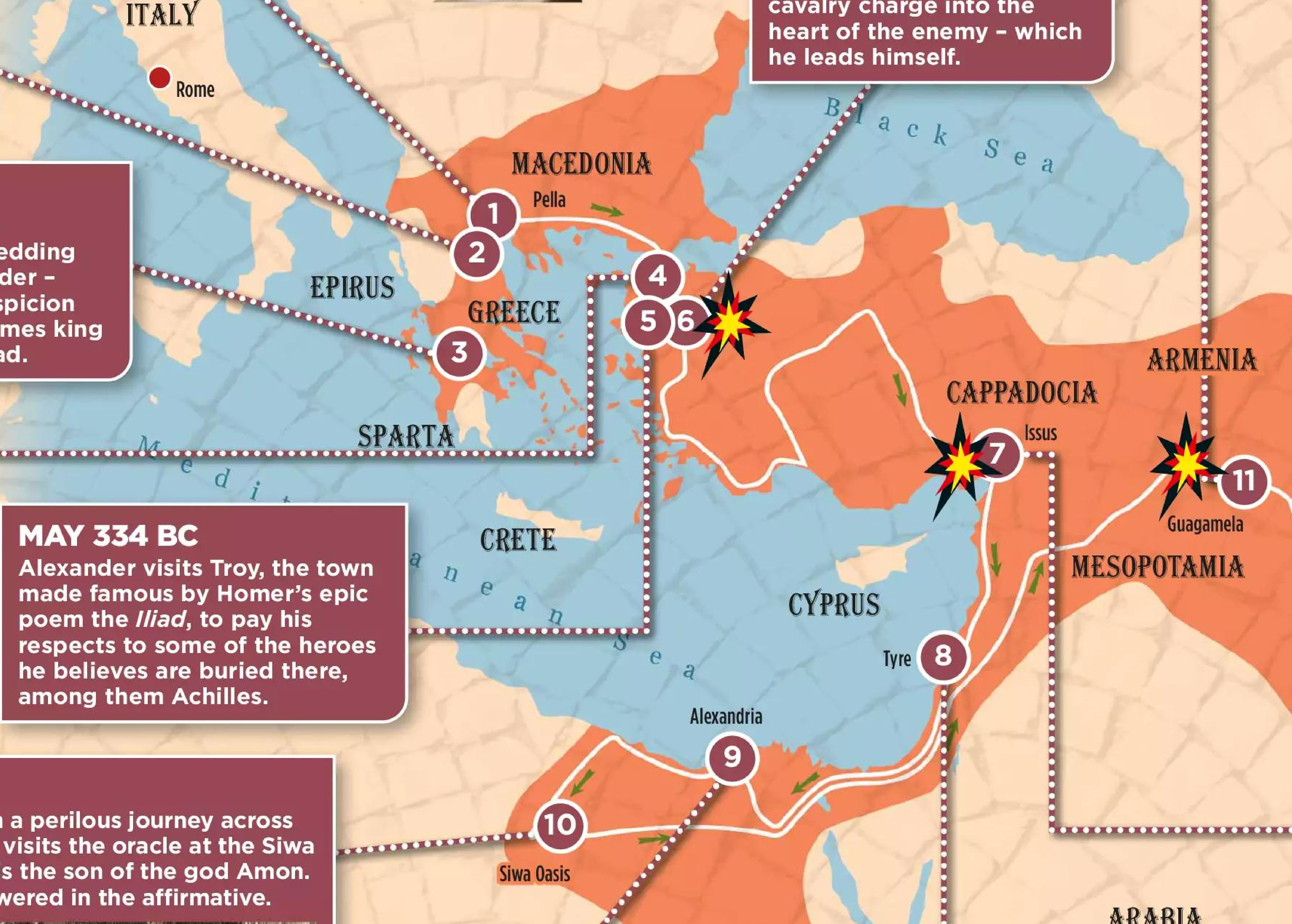
With an army about 50,000 strong, Alexander crosses the Hellespont to Asia Minor. His goal: to seize Persia and become the master of Asia.

### MAY 334 BC

Alexander visits Troy, the town made famous by Homer's epic poem the *Iliad*, to pay his respects to some of the heroes he believes are buried there, among them Achilles.

### MAY 334 BC

The Persian king, Darius III, sends an army to confront the Macedonians on the banks of the Granicus river. Alexander secures victory following an audacious cavalry charge into the heart of the enemy – which he leads himself.



### JULY 332 BC

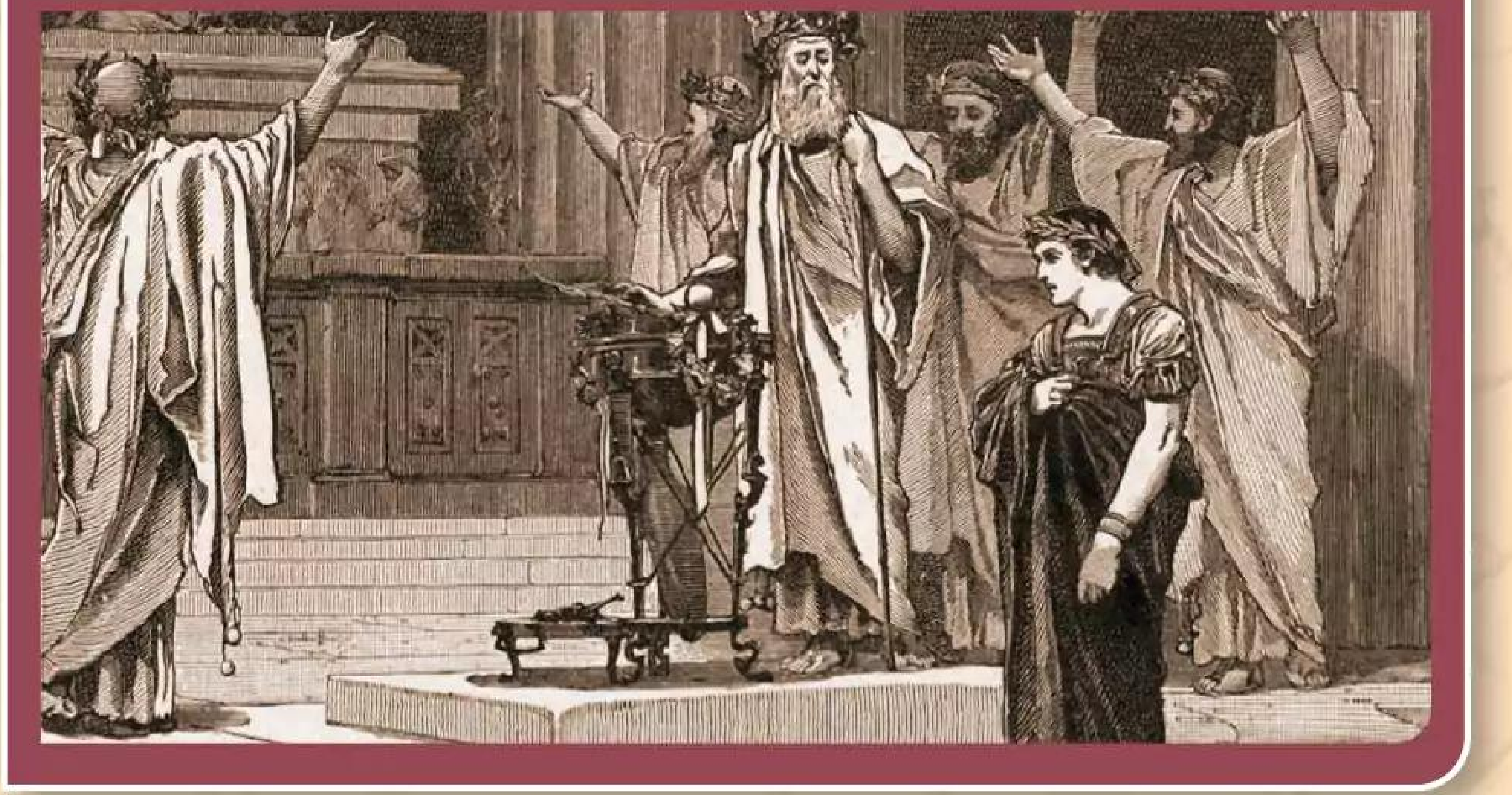
In a masterclass of ingenuity and resolve, Alexander storms Tyre following a seven-month siege, which had seen his men build a half-mile-long causeway out to the island. He then oversees the slaughter of 8,000 of the city's inhabitants.

### 331 BC

Alexander founds Alexandria on Egypt's north coast. The city goes on to become one of the Mediterranean's most important ports. Today nearly 5 million people call it home.

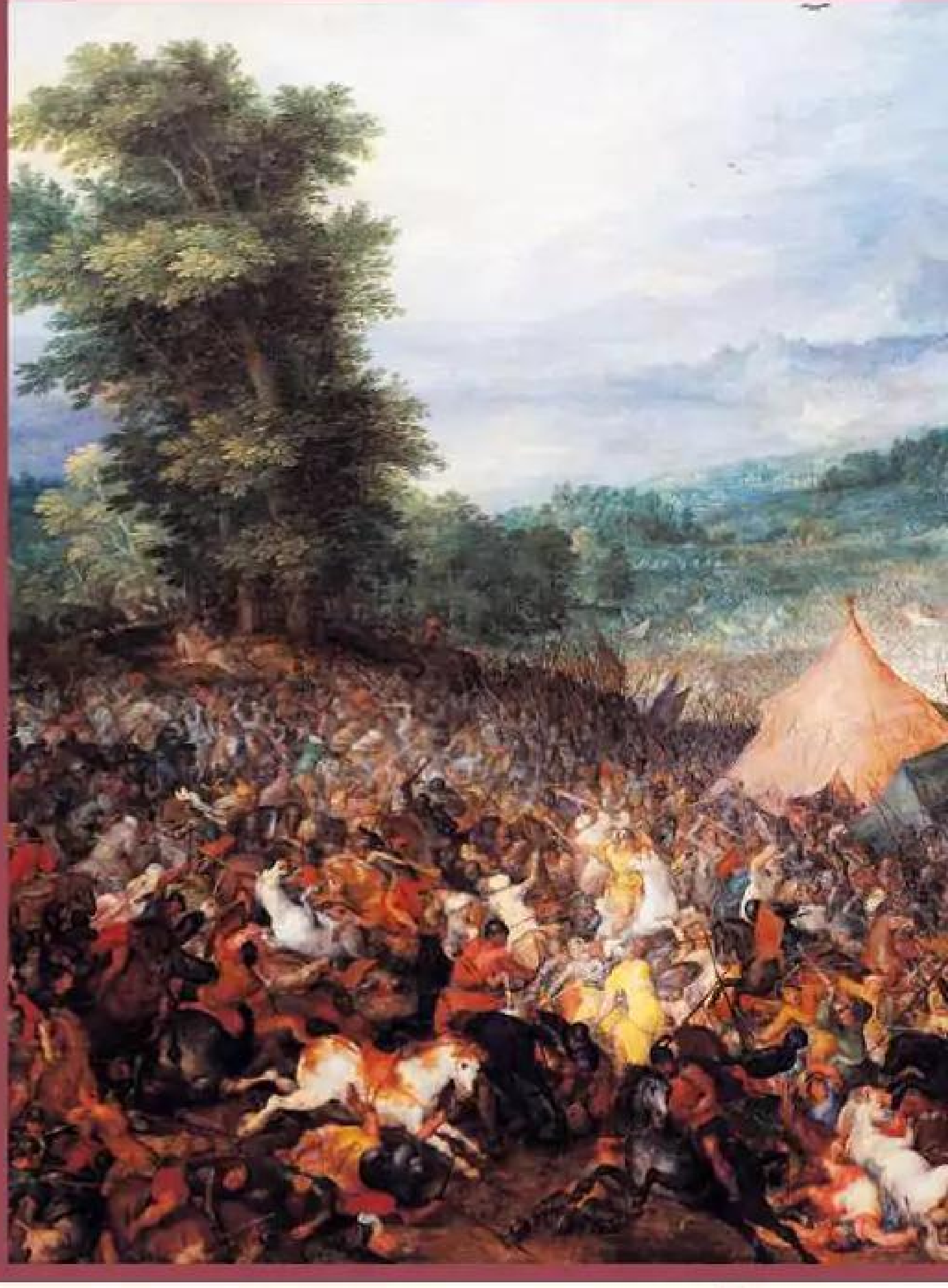
### 332 BC

After leading a party of men in a perilous journey across the Saharan desert, Alexander visits the oracle at the Siwa Oasis, where he asks her if he is the son of the god Amon. He later suggests that she answered in the affirmative.



### 1 OCTOBER 331 BC

Darius brings an enormous army to the field near Gaugamela in modern Iraq. What follows is the decisive battle in Alexander's conquest of Persia. Though Alexander's army is perhaps less than half the size of its Persian foe, the Macedonian troops' superior training and resolve – not to mention their commander's peerless tactical agility – prevails once more. Darius flees the battlefield again. But this time there is no reprieve: soon after, he is slaughtered by his own men.



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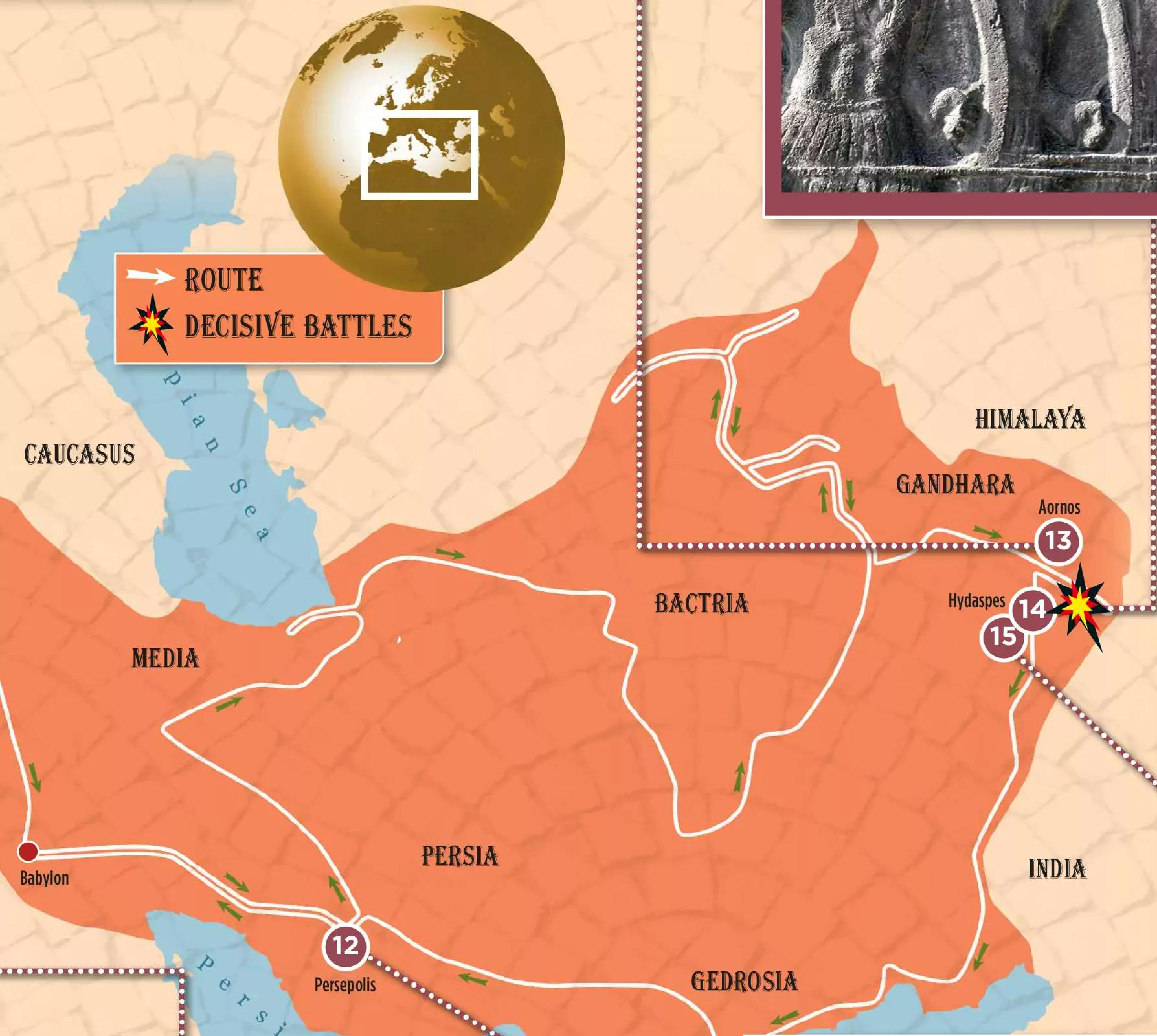
### 327 BC

In another masterclass of improvisation, Alexander seizes Aornos, a seemingly impregnable stronghold blocking his entry into India. Alexander's solution is to seize the hill opposite and drive the enemy out of their encampment with his catapults.

### MAY 326 BC

The powerful Indian raja Porus confronts the Macedonians on the banks of the river Hydaspes. In an incredibly hard-fought battle, Alexander's phalanx gets the better of an Indian army that includes 200 elephants. Hydaspes is the last great battle of Alexander's campaign in the east – but it is also the bloodiest, pushing the Macedonian army to breaking point.



### DID YOU KNOW?

**CREATING A LEGACY**

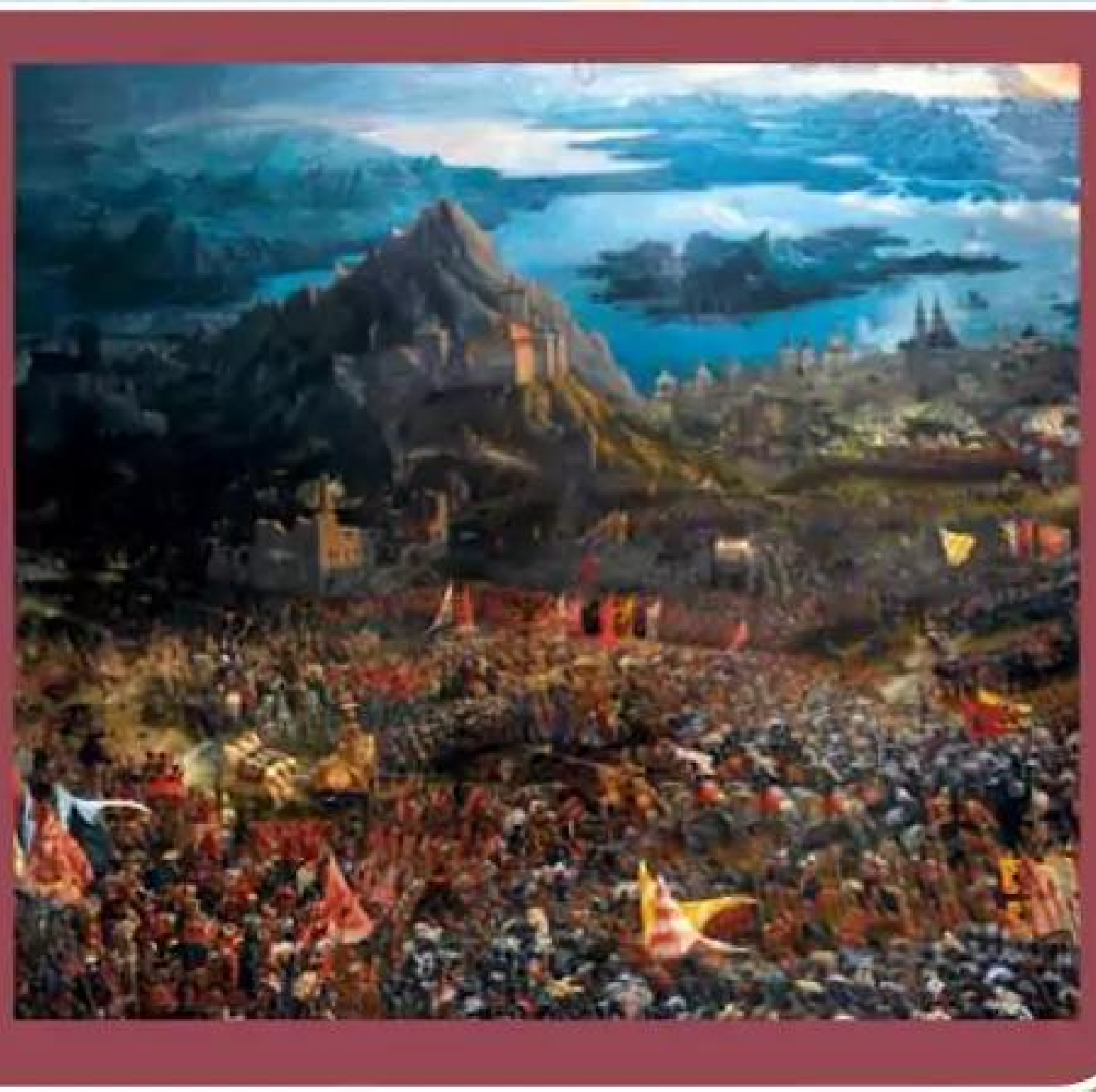
As he conquered region after region, according to Plutarch, Alexander the Great founded 70 towns and cities, including at least 16 that he modestly named Alexandria.

### 326 BC

Drenched by Indian monsoon rains and traumatised by the carnage at Hydaspes, Alexander's men decide they have had enough and mutiny. Eight years and 17,000 miles into his epic journey east, Alexander is forced to accept that his remarkable campaign of conquest is over.

### 5 NOVEMBER 333 BC

Darius attacks Alexander near Issus. The Persian army fares no better than at Granicus – a whirlwind Greek cavalry assault proves decisive and Darius flees the battlefield.



### 330 BC

The Macedonian army descends on the Persian capital of Persepolis and, in an orgy of drink-fuelled violence, loots the city and burns its great palace to the ground.

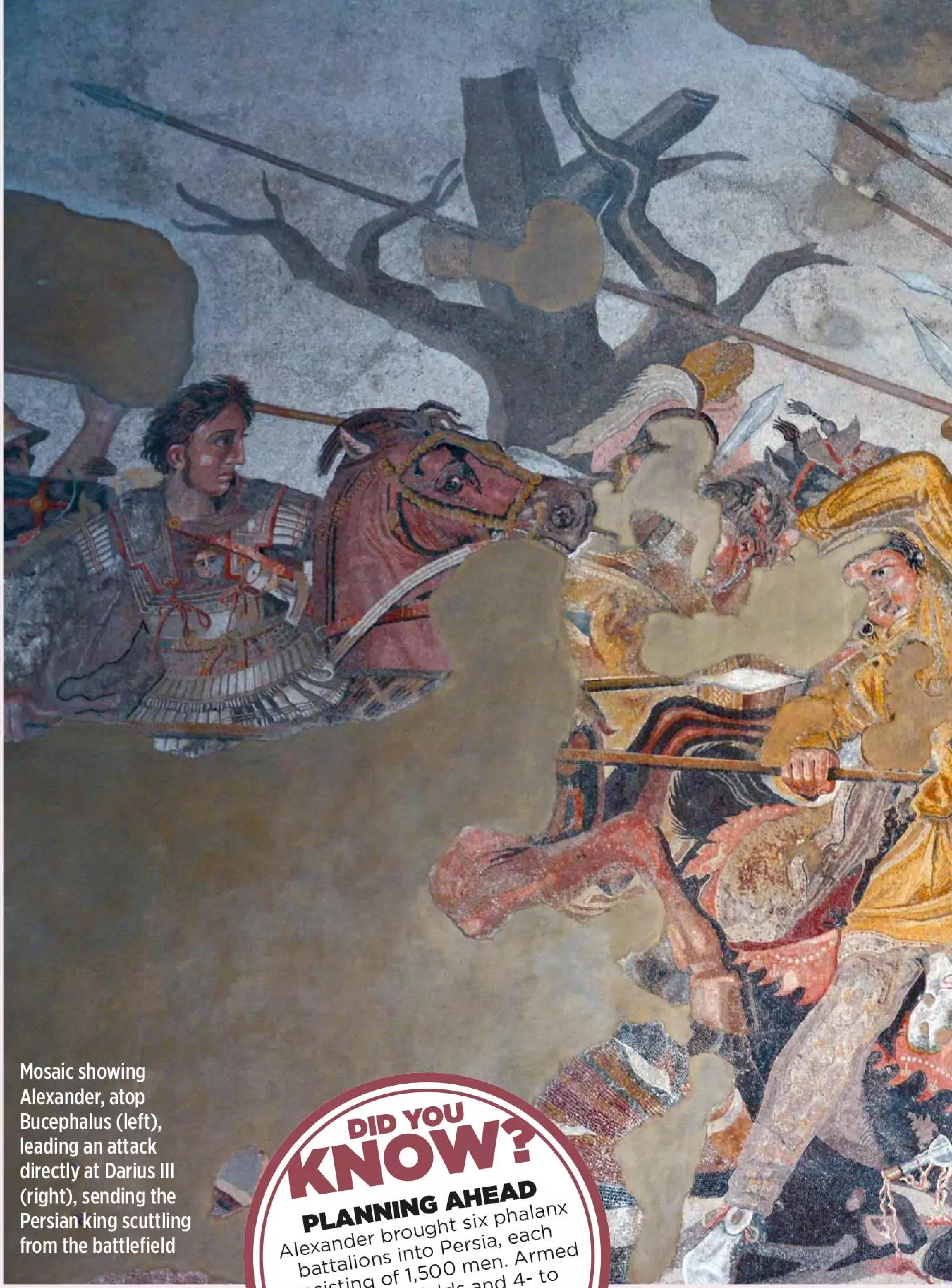
## ALEXANDER LEGENDS
## MAN & MYTH

That Alexander adored his horse, Bucephalus, and rode it throughout his great Asian campaign, is beyond doubt (Alexander was bereft when the horse died and named a city, Alexandria Bucephala, after it). What *is* up for debate is how man and horse were united in the first place. According to Plutarch, Bucephalus was so wild, Philip II turned down an offer to buy him, only to look on, astonished, as Alexander tamed it in seconds. True or not, Bucephalus has become one of the most famous horses in history.

If the legend of Bucephalus hints at Alexander's gentler side, the tale of the death of Bessus reveals a far darker aspect to his character. Bessus was a Persian governor who led resistance to Alexander in the summer of 329 BC, until he was betrayed by his own men. Alexander had Bessus tried and tortured; that much we can be sure of. But it's the manner of his execution that divides historians. Was he beheaded or crucified? Or, most grisly of all, was Plutarch correct when he reported that Alexander "had the tops of two straight trees bent down so that they met and part of Bessus's body was tied to each. Then each tree was let go."

The phrase 'cutting the Gordian knot' signifies a bold solution to a complicated problem. It derives, so the legend goes, from Alexander's conquest of the city of Gordium in Anatolia. There he was shown the chariot of the ancient founder of the city, Gordius, with its yoke secured to a pole by an intricate knot. Tradition had it that it would be untied by the future ruler of Asia. But Alexander, ever the impetuous warrior, apparently sliced through it with his sword.

Alexander treasured his horse Bucephalus and named a city after him


Mosaic showing Alexander, atop Bucephalus (left), leading an attack directly at Darius III (right), sending the Persian king scuttling from the battlefield

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**PLANNING AHEAD**

Alexander brought six phalanx battalions into Persia, each consisting of 1,500 men. Armed with light shields and 4- to 6-metre spears called sarissa, they contained the enemy until he sent in the cavalry.

◀ Macedon, Philip was knifed to death by one of his own bodyguards.

For centuries historians have speculated whether Alexander ordered the assassination. More still have pointed the finger of blame at his mother, Olympias. What is certain is that, in no time at all, Olympias appears to have ordered the death of Philip's newborn son, and Alexander had had himself crowned king of Macedon aged 20.

If Macedon's generals believed their callow new king would show deference to the huge neighbour to the east, they were in for a rude awakening. Fired by a manic ambition to outdo his father, emulate his hero Achilles and plunder Asia's vast wealth, Alexander set about launching his own invasion of Persia.

He did just that in 334 BC when, reports the Greek historian Diodorus, Alexander crossed the Hellespont (the Dardanelles) separating Greece from Asia Minor at "the head of 60 fighting ships", before throwing his spear down into the sand and symbolically receiving "Asia from the gods as a spear-won prize".

Alexander had every right to be confident. The 50,000 men that he led into Asia were well trained and used to winning. Alexander's most potent weapon was the phalanx, a body of highly disciplined fighters trained to advance in unison behind a barrage of 15–18ft spears. As the Persians would discover on numerous occasions over the coming years, confronting the phalanx was like taking on an enormous hedge of lethal steel.

It wasn't long before the phalanx was given an opportunity to display its martial prowess. For, soon after heading to the fallen walls of Troy to pay his respects to "tombs of the heroes Achilles, Ajax" (Diodorus), Alexander's army was confronted by a huge Persian force, headed by a Greek mercenary, on the banks of the river Granicus in north-western Anatolia.

With the Persians massed high up on the opposite bank of the river,

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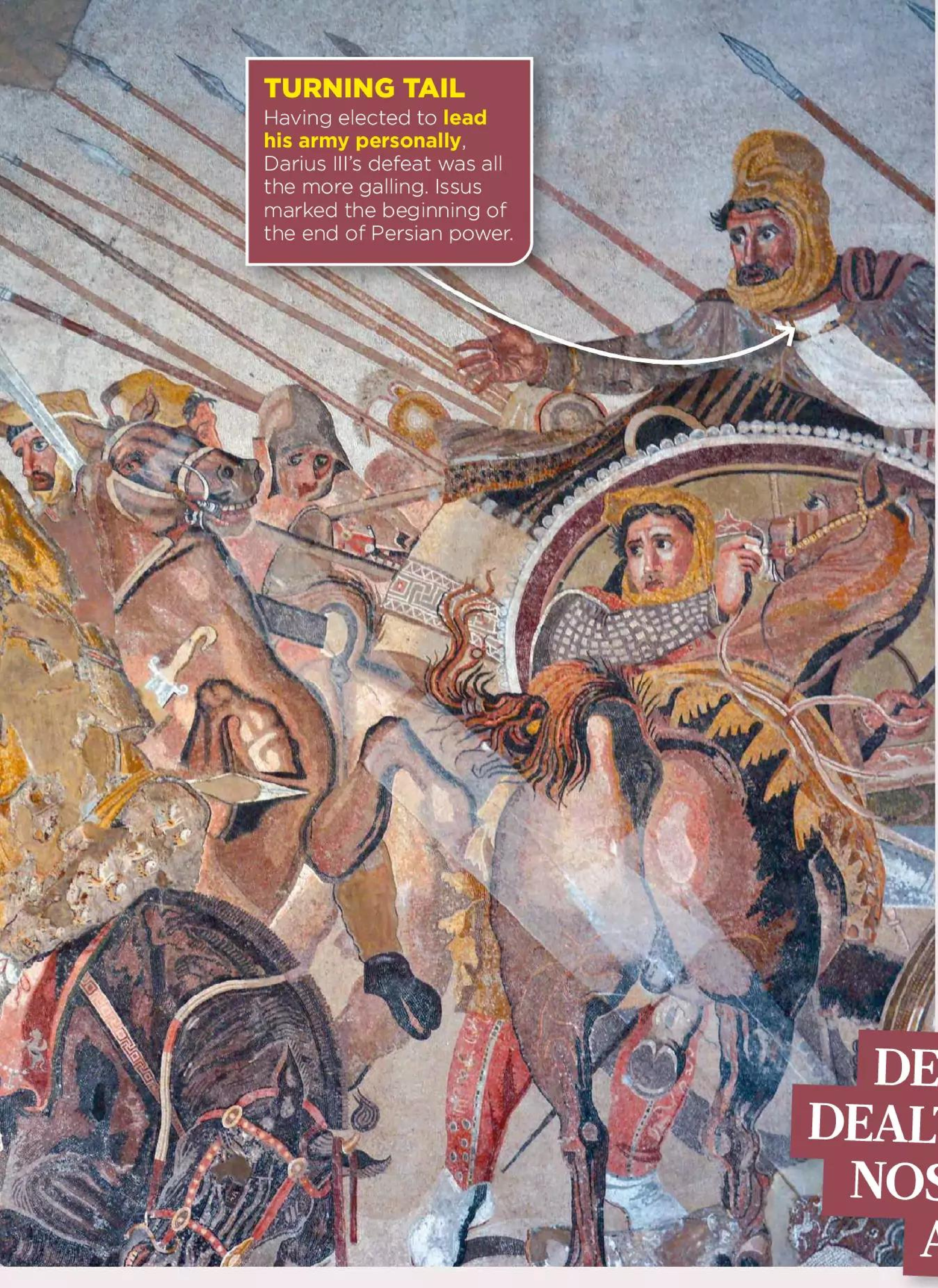
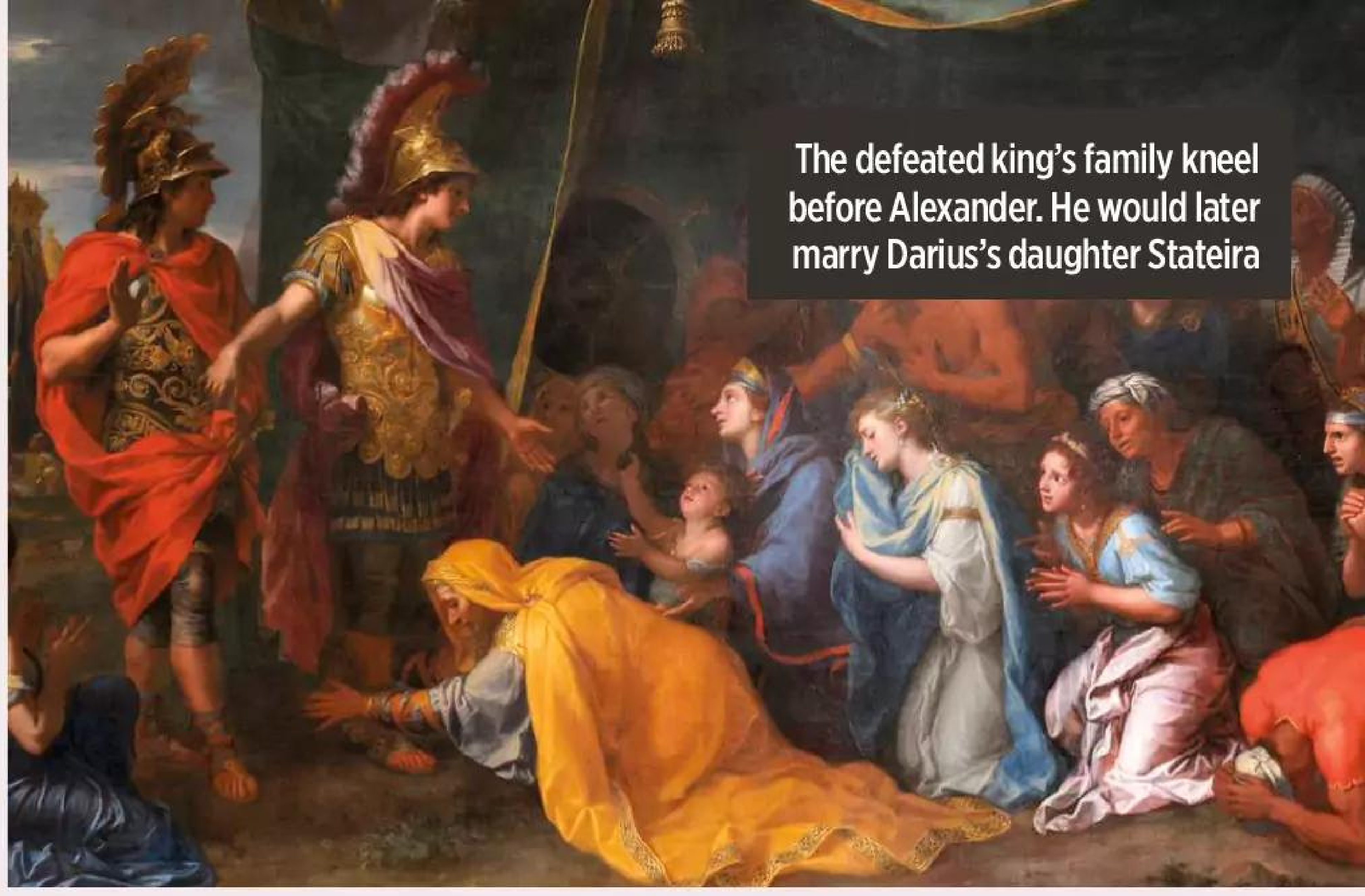
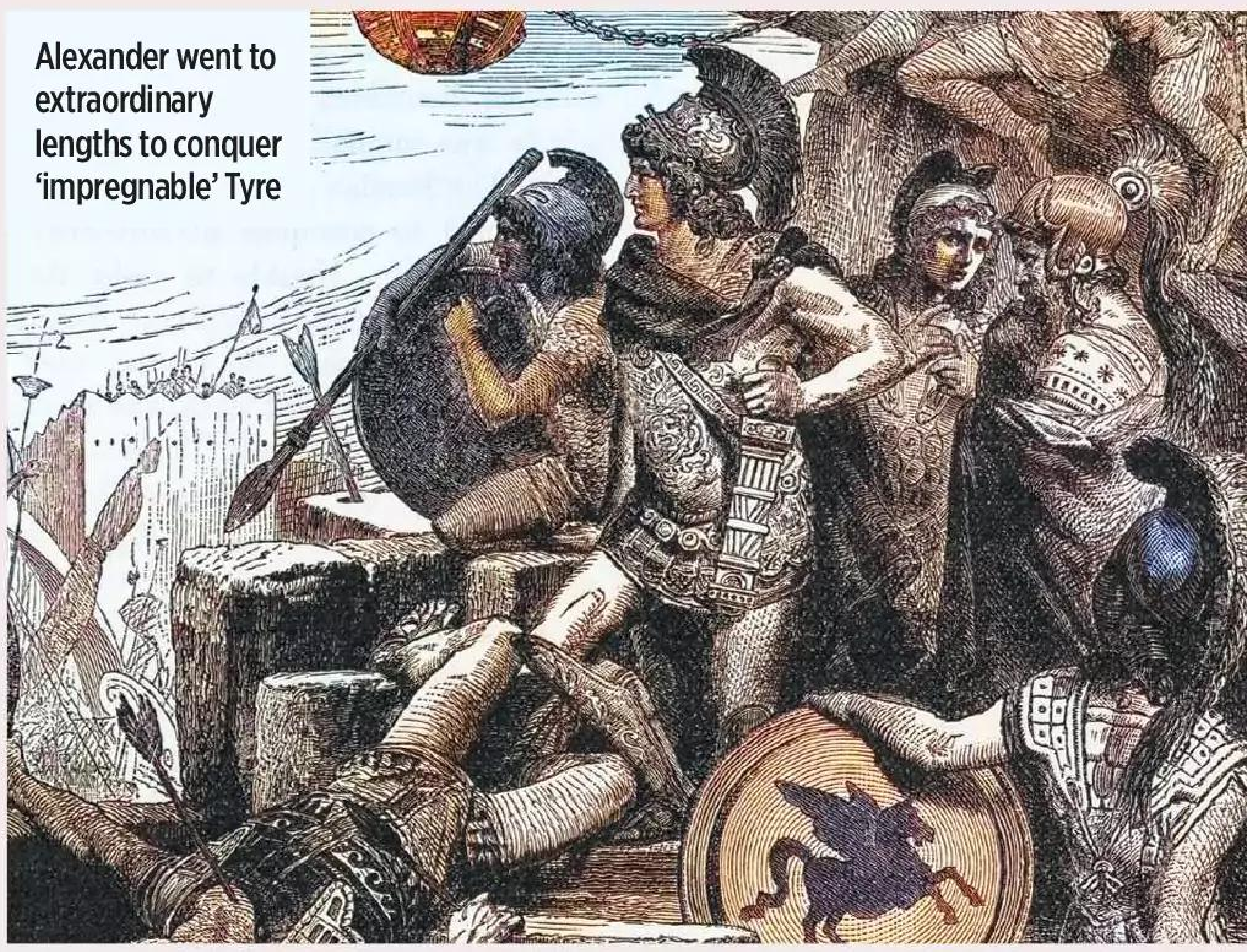


**TURNING TAIL**

Having elected to **lead his army personally**, Darius III's defeat was all the more galling. Issus marked the beginning of the end of Persian power.



The defeated king's family kneel before Alexander. He would later marry Darius's daughter Stateira



Alexander went to extraordinary lengths to conquer 'impregnable' Tyre

Alexander's generals counselled caution – advice he completely ignored. Instead he launched a head-on attack across the river that was as bold as it was devastatingly effective. Soon his attackers were in among the Persians, forcing them to break and run. And the most extraordinary thing about the victory? Alexander led the attack himself, losing his spear and getting struck on the helmet in the process.

By late 333 BC, Alexander's army had marched the length of the Anatolian peninsula. With the Macedonians now threatening the coastline of the eastern Mediterranean, deep into his empire, Darius felt compelled to confront Alexander once more in battle. This time, the Persian king would lead the army himself.

## HELL-BENT ON PERSIA

Darius caught up with the Macedonians at Issus. With somewhere between 60,000 and 100,000 troops, Darius almost certainly enjoyed a substantial numerical advantage. But it was to no avail. At Granicus, Alexander had shown his immense personal bravery. At Issus, he revealed an almost superhuman ability to rapidly assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of the armies, identify an opportunity and exploit it ruthlessly. On seeing that the usually all-conquering phalanx was bogged down on rough terrain, he led a whirlwind cavalry attack directly at Darius himself. It was a battle-winning move. Many of Darius's bodyguard were cut down, and the now panicking Persian king fled the battlefield in his chariot.

DEFEAT AT GRANICUS HAD DEALT THE PERSIANS A BLOODY NOSE. ISSUS, HOWEVER, WAS A SEVERE BODY BLOW

Defeat at Granicus had dealt the Persians a bloody nose. Issus, however, was a severe body blow. In the wake of the battle, Alexander captured Darius's wife and two of his daughters. Cyprus and Phoenicia now came under his control. The ports on the eastern Mediterranean were ripe for the picking.

Faced with this apocalyptic scenario, Darius felt he had no choice but to offer terms: all territory west of the river Euphrates and his daughter's hand in marriage. It was a generous offer and many leaders may have accepted it. Not Alexander. He was utterly hell-bent on destroying Darius, a fact reflected in his scathing reply: "Address your letters to the king of all Asia," he replied, "…do not run away… I will hunt you down."

If these words hint at Alexander's granite-like determination to bend everything in his path to his will, the fate of Tyre – an important supply base for the Persian army – confirms it. Surrounded by huge walls and half a mile out from the coast of what is now Lebanon, Tyre was considered impregnable. This made Alexander all the more determined to seize it. And that's exactly what he did. In a plan that was so ambitious it bewildered even his own men, he built a causeway out to the island and, following a seven-month siege, successfully stormed the port.

The seizure of Tyre has been hailed as one of the greatest feats of conquest in history. But it had a dark side. According to the Roman historian Quintus Curtius Rufus, after taking the island, Alexander's men slaughtered 8,000 Tyrians and sold a further 30,000 into slavery. It was a brutal lesson to the watching world that it didn't pay to resist Alexander.

AT GAUGAMELA, AS AT ISSUS, ALEXANDER WAS SIMPLY TOO DECISIVE AND QUICK-WITTED FOR HIS OPPONENT

Darius is roundly defeated by the Macedonian fighting force for the final time at the battle of Gaugamela, 331 BC

## DID YOU KNOW?

### TYING THE KNOT

Alexander married at least three times: first to Roxana, captured in Bactria, then to Stateira II, daughter of Darius III, and Parysatis II, daughter of the Shah of Persia, both captured at Issus

◀ The people of Egypt certainly got the message. In fact, when the Macedonian army arrived in their homeland, Egyptians declared Alexander pharaoh. Alexander's seizure of Egypt would have appealed to the love of history and art drilled into him by Aristotle, and – in a land that routinely hailed its leaders as gods – his growing obsession with his own divinity. Yet he would leave behind something far more tangible than his own growing megalomania – a magnificent port on Egypt's northern coast. The city of Alexandria was, according to Plutarch, one of more than 70 cities that the Macedonian leader founded across his empire, many named after himself. Eighty per cent of Egypt's imports and exports continue to flow through its harbour today.

### DARIUS GOES DOWN

After leaving Egypt, Alexander drove his army back up the coast of the eastern Mediterranean, before crossing the Euphrates and heading deeper into Mesopotamia. He was now undoubtedly the most powerful man in Asia, yet he could not yet declare himself undisputed lord of Persia – not until he had delivered Darius a knock-out blow. He was to get his opportunity at a place called Gaugamela in modern Iraq.

It's possible that the army Darius brought to the battlefield on 1 October 331 BC numbered more than 100,000, perhaps double the size of the Macedonian force. He could also call upon the latest in military technology: chariots bearing fearsome scythes a metre in length.

If Alexander was in any way troubled by the size of the Persian army, he certainly didn't show it. Plutarch tells us that he rejected the suggestion to attack the Persians at night, giving the declaration: "I will not steal my victory." Other reports suggest that he slept so well the night before the battle, his men had to wake him.

His confidence was justified. As at Issus, Alexander was simply too decisive and quick-witted for his opponent. The massive Persian army had the better of the early exchanges, and began to slowly encircle the Macedonians. Alexander's response was masterful. He tempted the Persian cavalry to attack his flank, opening up a small gap for his own cavalry to punch through at the heart of the enemy. The ruse worked to perfection. Darius, writes Plutarch, "forsook his chariot and his armour… and took to flight".

Gaugamela is widely described as one of the greatest victories in ancient history. With Darius defeated and soon dead (at the hands of his own men), it surely marks the high-water mark of Alexander's career. There would be more victories and more conquests, but from this point on his behaviour would often be marred by drunkenness, paranoia and megalomania.

That drunkenness was in full evidence when his army descended on the Persian capital of Persepolis to loot its vast wealth. By now, Alexander had developed "an inexcusable fondness for drink", records Rufus, even killing Cleitus, one of his most trusted generals, in a drunken quarrel. At least two more prominent generals would lose their lives as a result of Alexander's growing paranoia. In 330 BC, Philotas was executed for allegedly plotting against the king. More shocking still was that Alexander had Philotas's father, Parmenion (who ▶

Alexandria, founded in 331 BC, became the cultural centre of the ancient world

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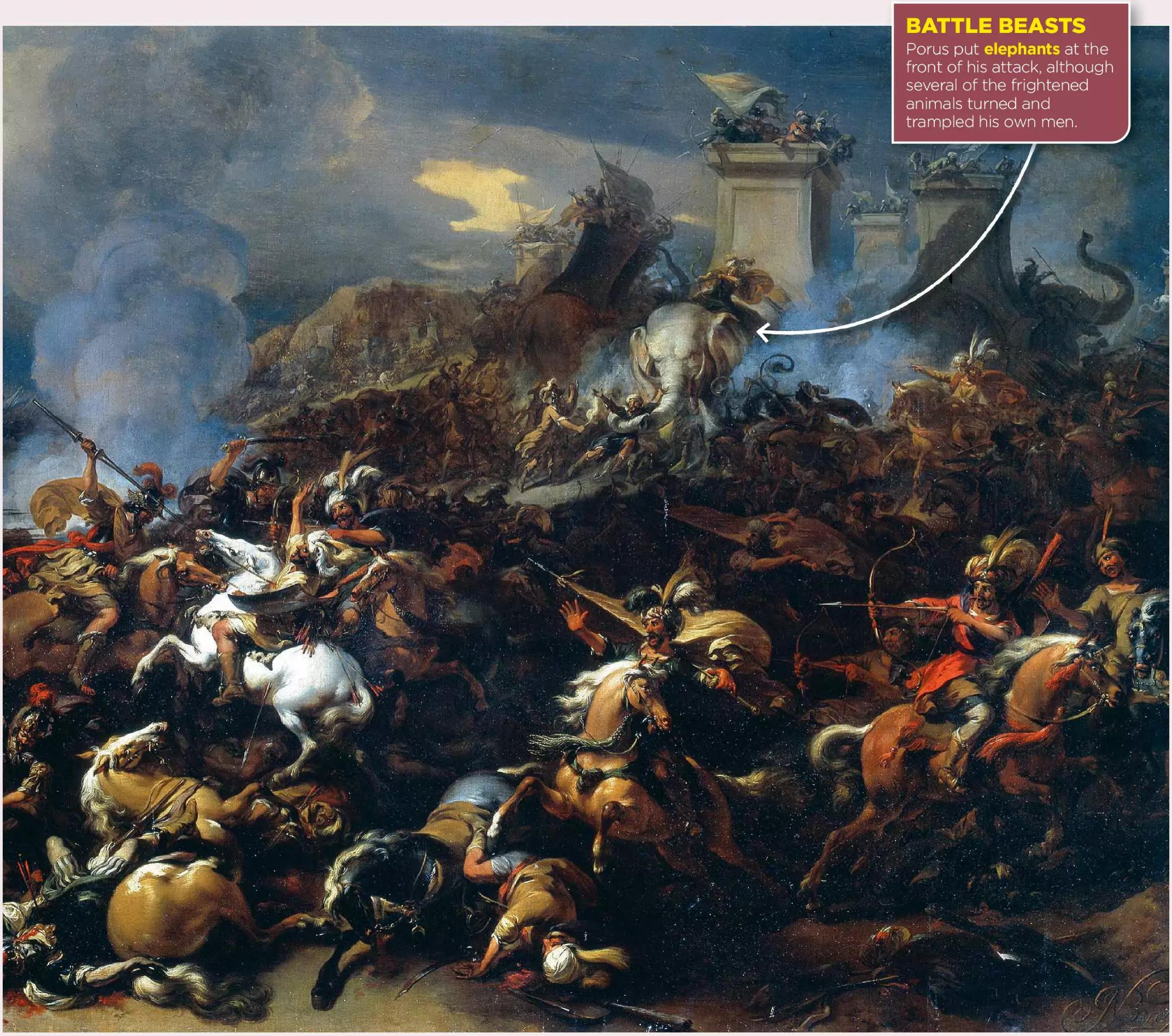


**BATTLE BEASTS**
Porus put **elephants** at the front of his attack, although several of the frightened animals turned and trampled his own men.

The Macedonians take on the Indian forces of Raja Porus and suffer large losses. With army morale at rock bottom, Alexander is forced to call a halt to his ever-expanding empire

◀ had served him for years) murdered too, purely by association. By the early 320s BC, Alexander's megalomania had manifested itself in a decree that his subjects prostrate themselves whenever they approached him. Callisthenes, Alexander's long-time personal historian, had the temerity to chide his king for this controversial practice. Soon after, Callisthenes would die from torture or disease in prison.

By now, writes Quintus Curtius Rufus, "most of his friends began to regard him as an enemy". But still Alexander retained the force of personality to drive his men on east. And now that he had conquered Persia, he had a new objective: to reach the place where, he believed, the Earth ran out and ended in a mighty ocean.

By spring 326 BC that quest had driven the army all the way to modern-day Pakistan. What Alexander's army discovered when it arrived at the banks of the river Hydaspes wasn't, however, the end of the Earth but a mighty army led by the powerful raja, Porus. Worse still, that army was massed around 200 elephants. The resulting clash would end in yet another triumph for the Greeks, and the annexation of the Punjab. But victory, in what was the bloodiest battle in the entire campaign, came at a price. Alexander's men could take no more.

Since leaving Macedon, the Greeks had stormed impregnable strongholds, defeated mighty armies, almost died of thirst in the sun-baked Saharan desert and faced starvation as they crossed the vertiginous Hindu Kush. Despite these hardships, Alexander – through sheer force of personality and the intoxication of success – had been able to keep driving them on. Not anymore.

"So hard fought was the battle of Hydaspes it convinced the men that they should not advance any further into India," writes Plutarch. And so, with monsoon rains drenching them for days on end, the Macedonians mutinied.

Alexander was so enraged by his army's disobedience he is said to have laid prostrate in his tent for a day. But even he had to accept the inevitable. Eight years and 17,000 miles into his staggering journey, Alexander was forced to turn around and head for home.

**WORDS: SPENCER MIZEN**

## GET HOOKED

**READ**
Paul Cartledge's *Alexander the Great: The Truth Behind the Myth* (Pan, 2013) is a thoroughly researched and entertaining telling of the story of Alexander

ALAMY X1, GETTY X1

## AFTER HYDASPES

## WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

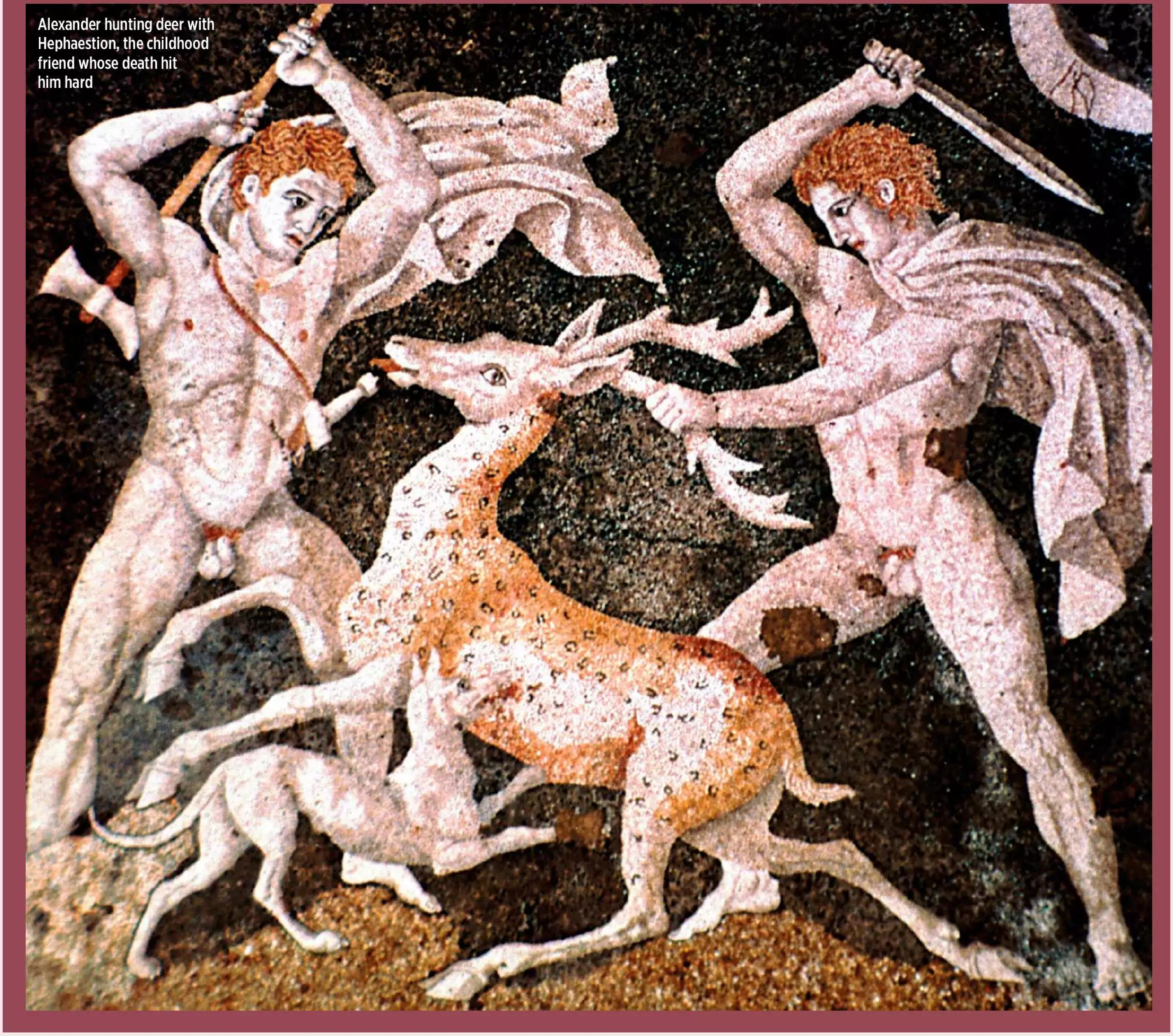
Alexander's aim of leading his army even deeper into Asia might have come to an end when his men mutinied in 326 BC, but his journey didn't. He was, after all, in the Indian subcontinent, thousands of miles from home. Plutarch tells us that he was now more determined than ever to reach the great outer ocean at the end of the Earth, and so he led his army on an expedition down the Hydaspes river.

It was a journey that took him into the territory of the Malli people of the Punjab, and a close brush with death. While leading an attack on the Mallians, Alexander was struck by an arrow, before being pulled to safety by his troops who, writes Plutarch, "had to cut out the arrow that was wedged between his ribs".

The Macedonians' slow retreat west over the next two years appears to have been marked by acrimony and death. Alexander lost thousands of soldiers to thirst and exhaustion while marching through the Gedrosia desert in Balochistan and his army grew ever more disillusioned with his increasing despotism and his practice of sending Greek troops home and replacing them with Persians.

The death of Hephaestion, one of his oldest and dearest friends – and perhaps a lover – in 324 BC, dealt a massive personal blow to Alexander. Arrian reports that he flung himself on the body of his friend and lay there crying all day.

Just a year later, Alexander followed his companion to the grave. Soon after returning to his new imperial capital of Babylon, he fell ill after a bout of heavy drinking. After ten feverish days, he was dead. Did he succumb to malaria, an old war wound, an assassin's poison? We'll probably never know. But one thing's for sure: one of the most extraordinary stories in history was over.



Alexander hunting deer with Hephaestion, the childhood friend whose death hit him hard

# EMPIRES AT WAR

# ROME VS GREECE

Macedon was the pre-eminent power in Ancient Greece, Rome an upstart republic on the ascendant. **Ben Kane** recalls the ultimate showdown between two of the earliest superpowers

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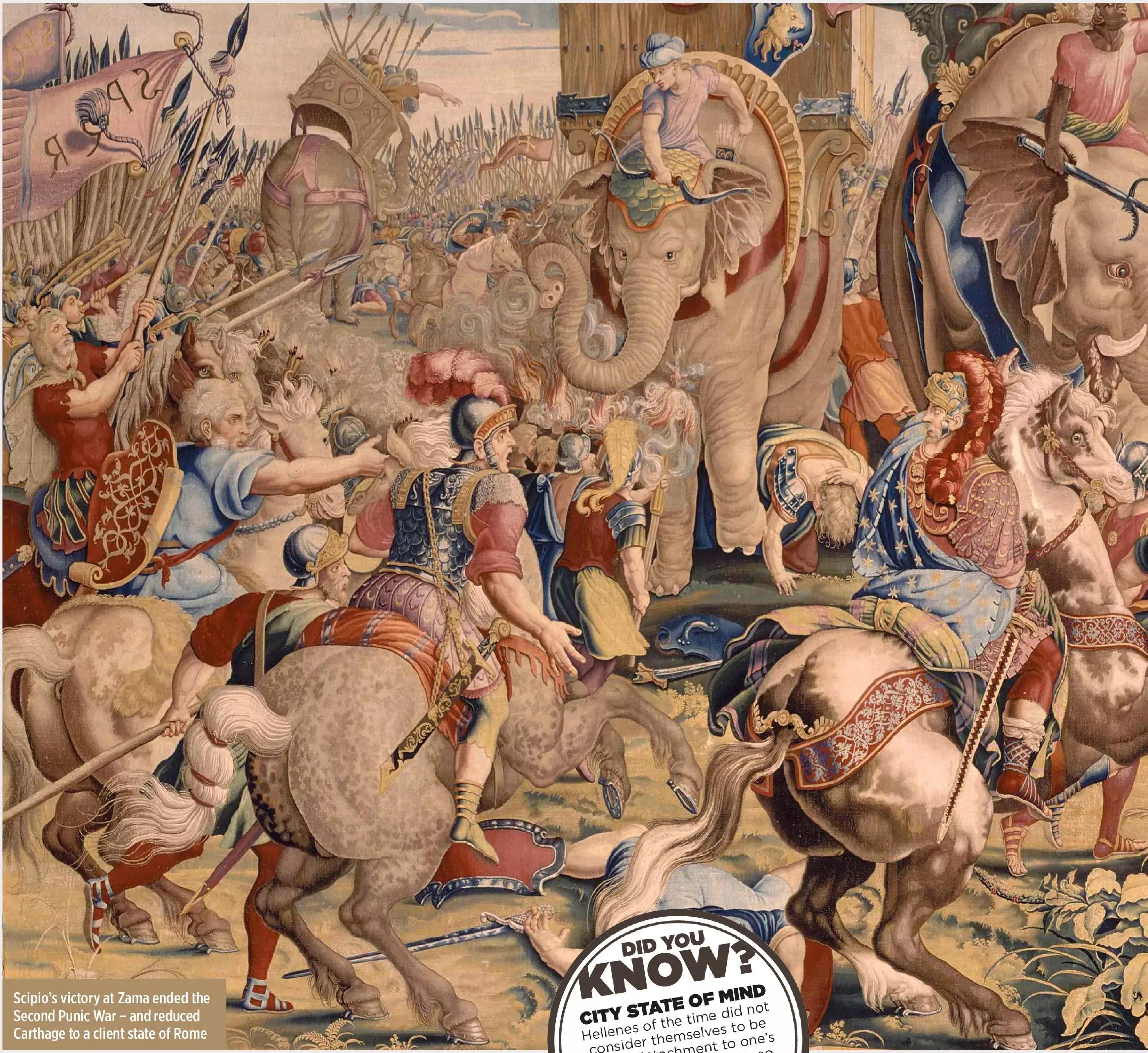


Scipio's victory at Zama ended the Second Punic War – and reduced Carthage to a client state of Rome

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**CITY STATE OF MIND**

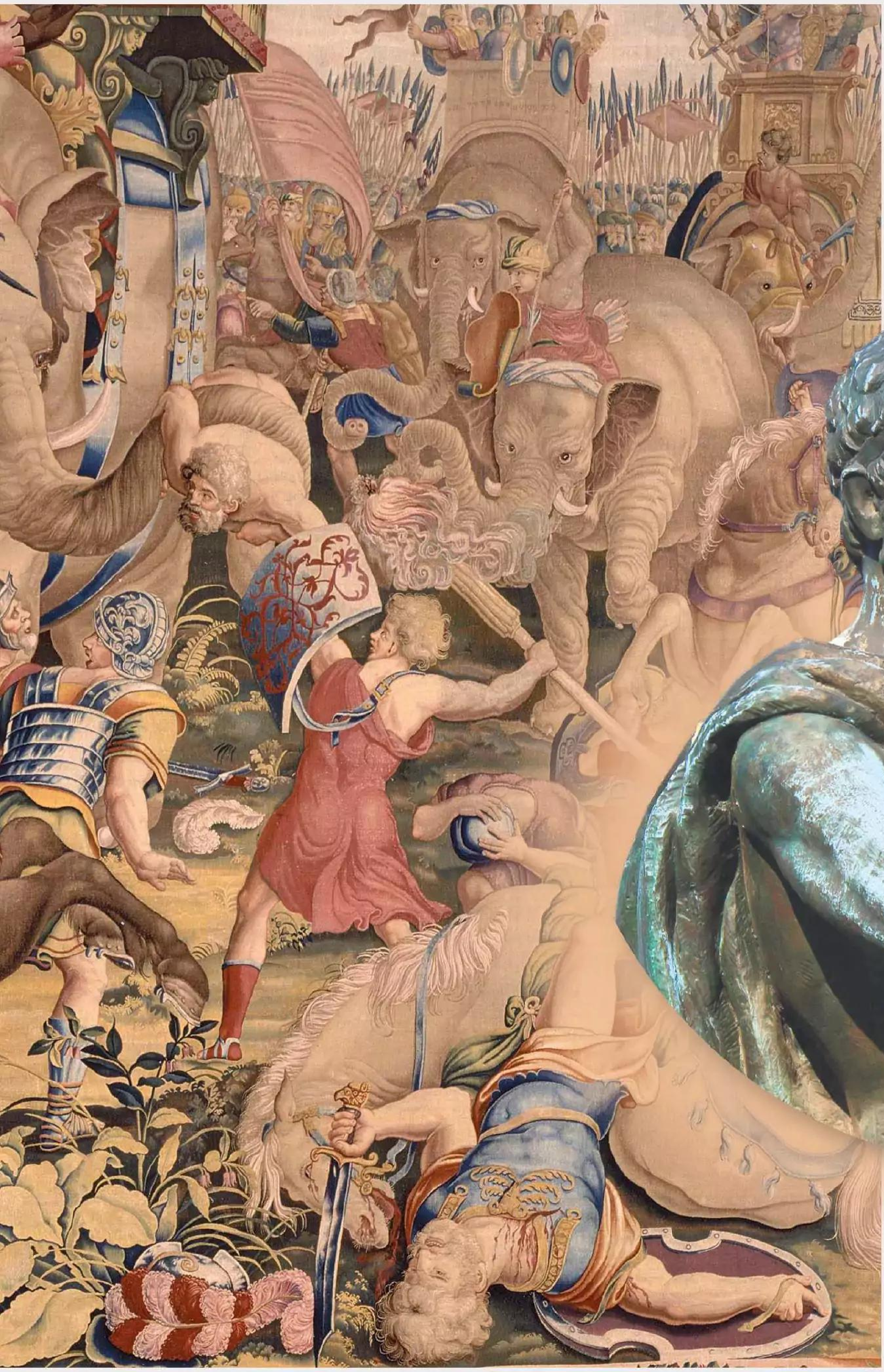
Hellenes of the time did not consider themselves to be 'Greek'. Attachment to one's city state was the norm, so a man might say he was Athenian, Spartan or Macedonian – but not Greek.

Pretty much everyone knows something about ancient Rome, whether it's Julius Caesar or gladiators, legions invading Britain or the majesty of the Colosseum. The same can be said of ancient Greece, from the Olympic Games to the Battle of Thermopylae, and literary treasures such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Given our relative familiarity with these two civilisations, it's odd that the pivotal moment in their combined history – when the Roman Republic invaded Greece – is almost unknown today.

Before launching into the details of that three-year war, it's useful to lay out the political landscape of the Mediterranean at that time. When the Second Punic War started in 218 BC, the Roman Republic was one of the smallest of five major powers around the Mediterranean. Half a century later, the situation had changed beyond recognition. Just two factions remained: weak and unstable Ptolemaic Egypt, and the ascendant Roman Republic.

Remarkably, the three that had fallen away – Carthage, Macedon and the Seleucid Empire – had all been beaten by Rome in war. In a mere 50 years, the Republic had morphed from a regional power with few territories into one that utterly dominated the Mediterranean world. This seismic change set Rome on the road to becoming an empire, a self-fulfilling path from which there was no turning back.

ALAMY X 2, GETTY X1



The Republic's war with Carthage lasted for 17 bitter years, from 218 BC to 201 BC. It was a conflict initiated by the Carthaginian military genius Hannibal Barca. Invading Italy by crossing the Alps in winter, he inflicted crushing defeats on the Romans at the Trebbia, Lake Trasimene and Cannae. Yet Hannibal never succeeded in forcing his enemies to surrender. Obdurate and resilient, Rome recruited new legions to replace those that had been annihilated, and fought on. It was a long, drawn-out war that spanned four fronts: mainland Italy, Sicily, Spain and, lastly, Carthage, in what is now Tunisia.

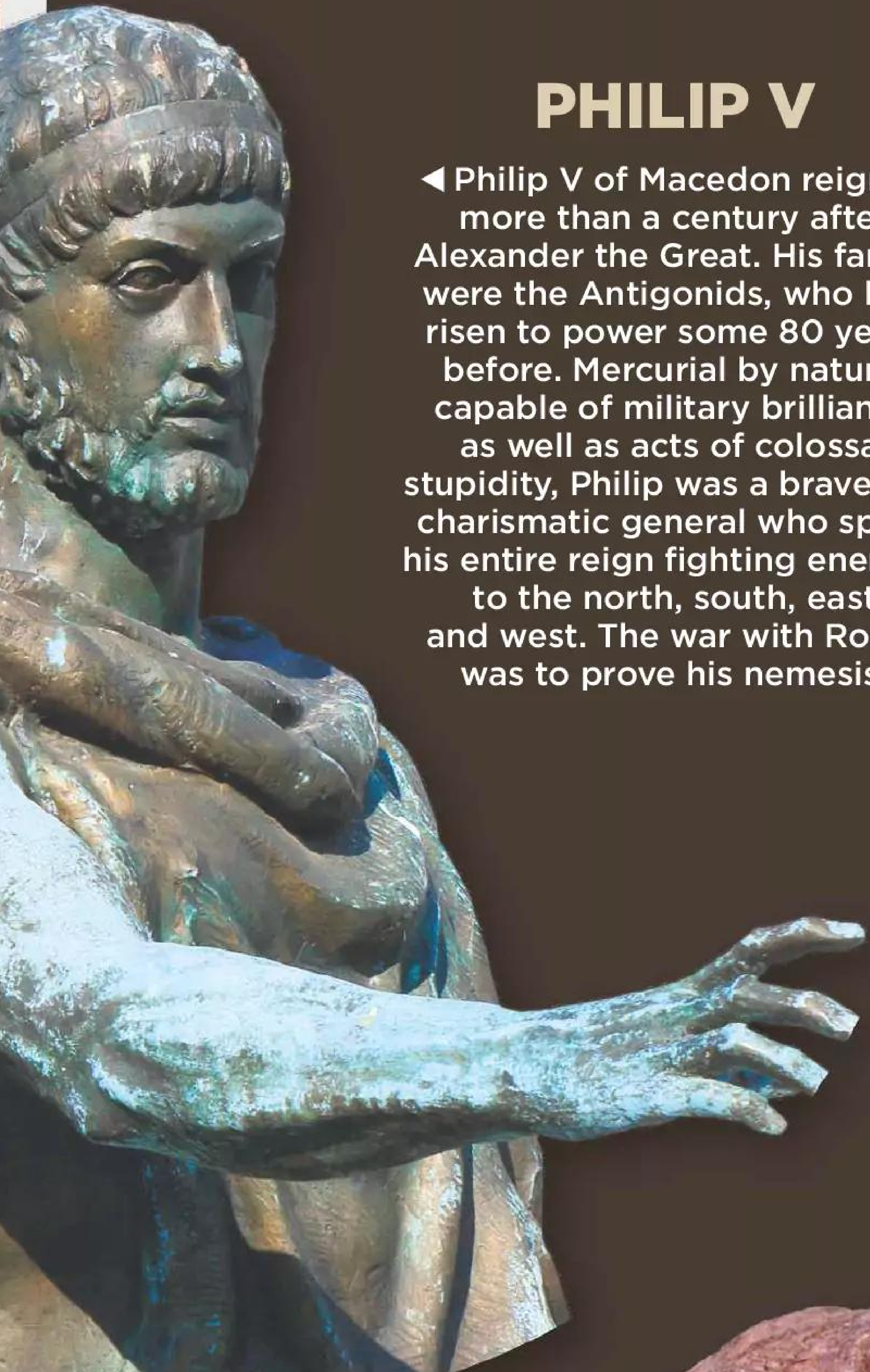
### OLD GRUDGES DIE HARD

One might think that the Romans would have had enough of war once victory over Hannibal and Carthage had been secured. Far from it. Less than two years after the decisive Battle of Zama, the Republic opened hostilities with King Philip V of Macedon. This wasn't a conflict that had come from nowhere, however: the

▶

## COMMANDERS UP CLOSE

# PHILIP V AND FLAMININUS



### PHILIP V

◀ Philip V of Macedon reigned more than a century after Alexander the Great. His family were the Antigonids, who had risen to power some 80 years before. Mercurial by nature, capable of military brilliance as well as acts of colossal stupidity, Philip was a brave and charismatic general who spent his entire reign fighting enemies to the north, south, east and west. The war with Rome was to prove his nemesis.

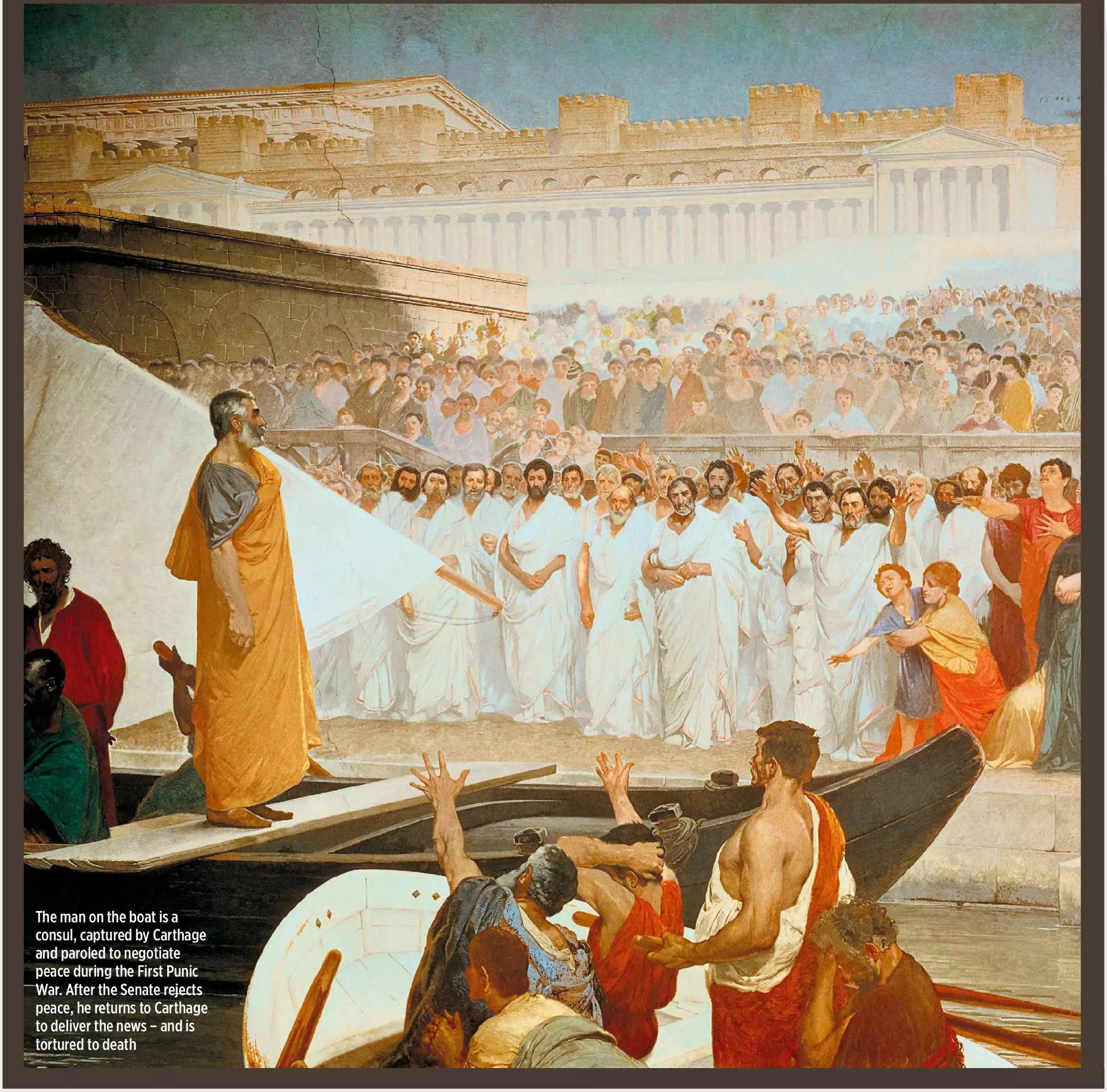
### TITUS QUINCTIUS FLAMININUS

▶ Flamininus was a fine example of the politician who let nothing get in his way. Serving as various types of magistrate during the war with Hannibal, he succeeded in becoming consul – one of the two most senior magistrates in the Republic – at the tender age of 30. Unusually for the time, he could write and speak Greek, but his love of all things Hellenic did not stop him spearheading a successful invasion of Macedon.

# THE RISE OF THE REPUBLIC

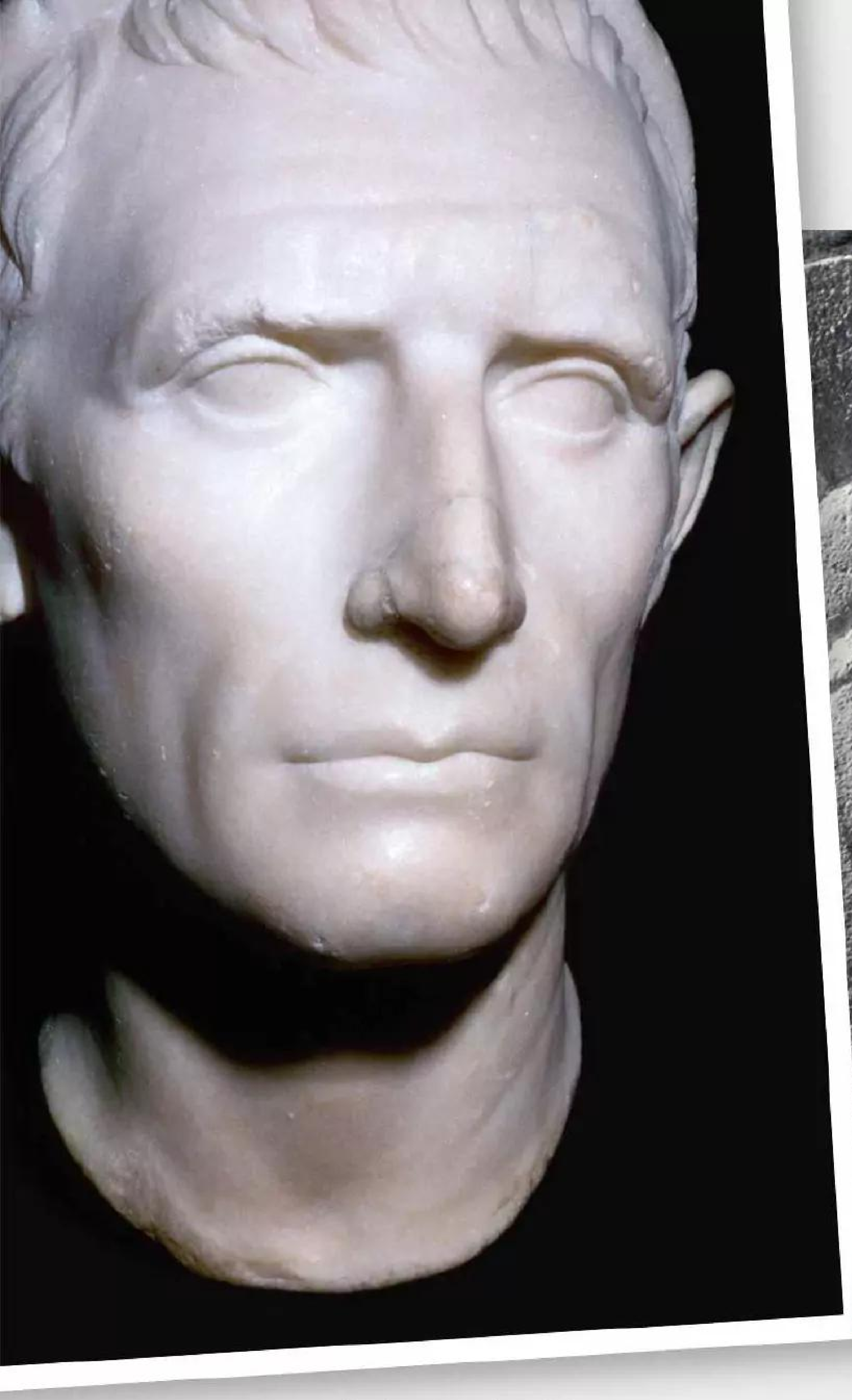
Born from the overthrow of the Roman kings in the late sixth century BC, the Republic was a democracy, albeit for landed citizens only. It was led by the Senate, a body of 300 senators, and a group of magistrates elected from within their own number. The two most senior magistrates were called consuls; serving for 12 months, their job was to lead the Republic in matters civil and military.

Until the fourth century BC, the Roman Republic was small and confined to west-central Italy. During a series of wars with its neighbours – including the Etruscans, Samnites and Latins – it gradually expanded, but by the time of the first war with the mighty power that was Carthage (264-241 BC), the Republic did not even control the entire Italian peninsula. By the end of the Second Punic War, however, a triumphant Rome was well on its way to becoming a superpower, annexing Sicily, Corsica and Sardinia. Just two years later, it opened hostilities with Macedon.

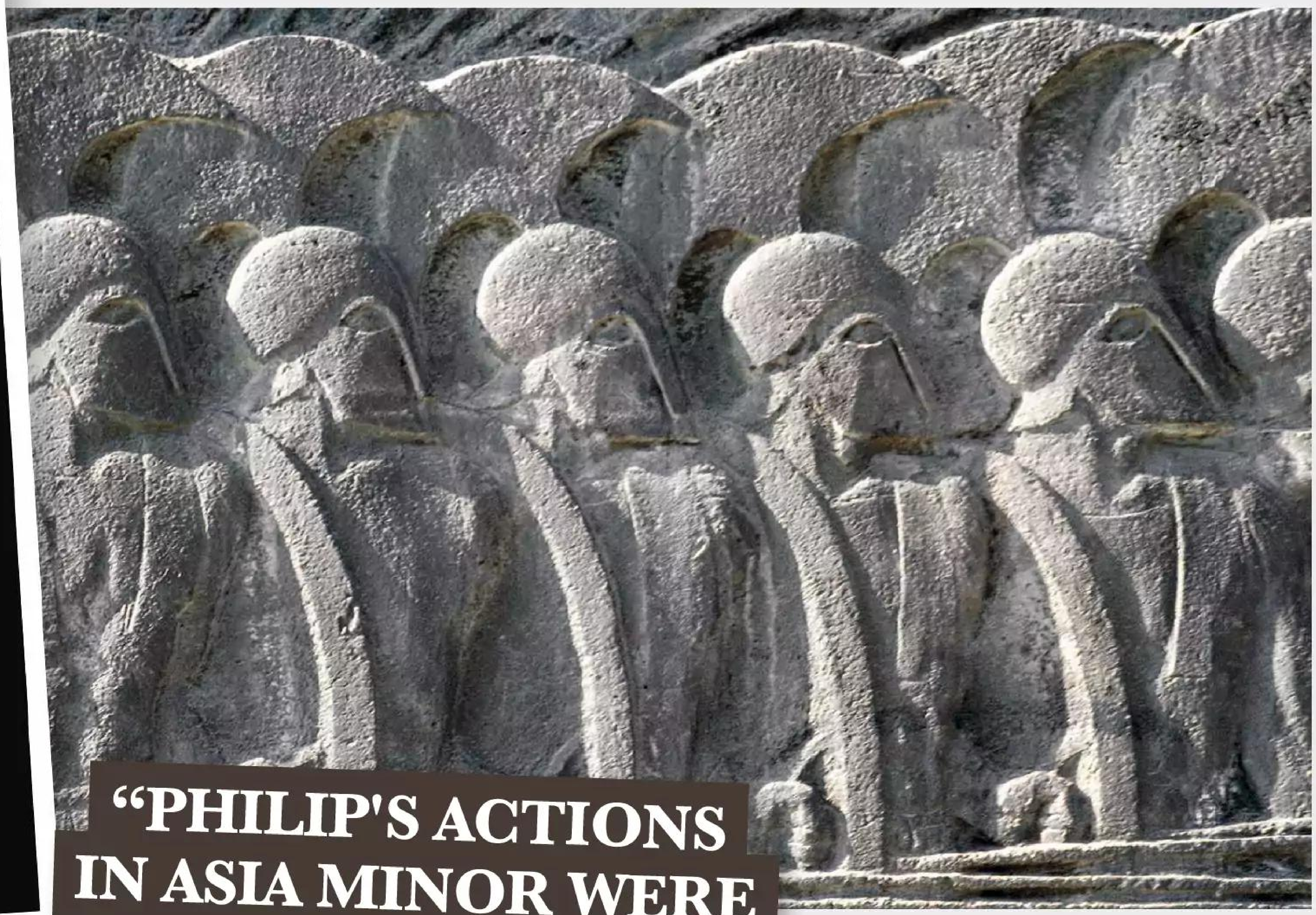


The man on the boat is a consul, captured by Carthage and paroled to negotiate peace during the First Punic War. After the Senate rejects peace, he returns to Carthage to deliver the news – and is tortured to death

AKG IMAGES X2, GETTY X1



Antiochus III, ruler of the Seleucids, was the one man Philip did not want to cross



The heyday of the Macedonian phalanx arrived during the conquests of Alexander the Great, who carved out one of the greatest empires the world has ever seen, stretching from Greece to India

> "PHILIP'S ACTIONS IN ASIA MINOR WERE TO HAVE MAJOR REPERCUSSIONS"

Romans and Philip had history with one another.

In 215 BC, the year after the Battle of Cannae, the chance interception of a ship off the southern coast of Italy had brought to light a most unwelcome revelation. Documents seized by the Roman navy proved that Philip and Hannibal had come together in secret alliance against the Republic. The Senate immediately sent a fleet to the east, its task to contain the Macedonian King. Events in Illyria soon took on a life of their own, and in 214 BC, war broke out between Rome and Macedon.

The conflict lingered on until 205 BC, a stop-start affair that played out all around the Greek coastline. Macedon fought alone, while the Romans had allies throughout the region. There were sieges, lightning-fast raids and withdrawals, victories and defeats on both sides. When peace was finally negotiated, the Republic's war with Hannibal was nearing its final act – it suited the Romans to end the conflict with Macedon. Aetolia, Rome's chief Greek ally, had had enough too. Philip, on the other hand, had reason to be content, having lost none of his territories and gained part of Illyria.

In the five years that followed, Hannibal was defeated by Scipio at Zama, while Philip busied himself campaigning on the coast of Asia Minor, where he had some successes against Rhodes, the Kingdom of Pergamum and others. For every achievement, however, it seemed Philip suffered a setback. He besieged but failed to take the city of Pergamum, and in a naval battle at Chios he lost a large part of his fleet, as well as thousands of sailors and soldiers. The most humiliating incident was the six months in the winter of 201-200 BC that Philip spent barricaded in a bay in western Turkey by a Pergamene and Rhodian fleet. Finally escaping by night, slipping past the ships of his enemies, he made his way back to Macedon.

Whatever other misjudgements Philip had made, he had been astute enough to avoid conflict with the powerful Seleucid Empire, which controlled most of modern-day Turkey and sprawled eastwards into the Middle East, Afghanistan and India. He also entered into a secret agreement with the Seleucid ruler, Antiochus III, that allowed both powers to attack settlements belonging to Ptolemaic Egypt.

## ROME'S REVENGE

Philip's actions in Asia Minor were to have major repercussions. In the autumn of 201 BC, Rhodes and Pergamum both sent embassies to Rome pleading for aid against him. Despite having rebuffed Aetolian emissaries asking for the same help only a few years before, this time the Senate listened – but its first motion for war was rejected by the Centuriate, the people's assembly.

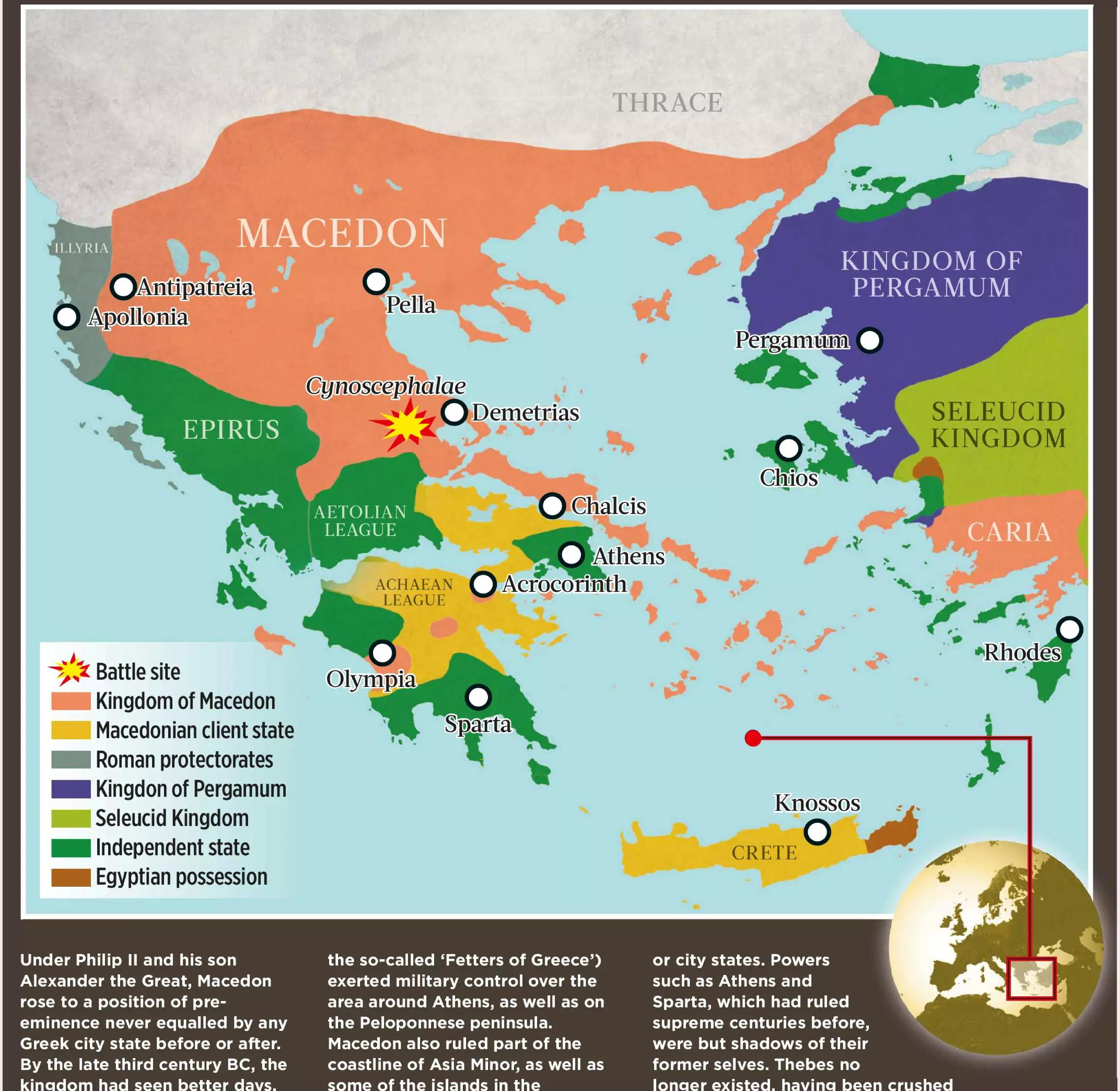
It is no surprise that the very people who had bled and died in vast numbers during the struggle against Hannibal were reluctant to pick up their swords and shields again so soon, but their resistance was short-lived. Politicians have always been prone to ignoring decisions made by plebiscite, and after six months – and in all likelihood, after some significant back-room politicking – the Centuriate reversed its decision.

It was late in the summer of 200 BC before an army was dispatched to Illyria. The chosen commander was Publius Sulpicius Galba, an experienced politician and leader who had served in various positions during the war with Hannibal, including that of consul. Setting up base near the city of Apollonia by September, Galba sent a legion up one of the several mountain valleys that led to Macedon. After a short siege, the town of Antipatreia was taken and sacked. Prudently deciding to end his year's campaign before winter arrived, Galba consolidated his position in Apollonia and waited for the spring.

Philip did the same in Macedon, but as soon as the weather began to improve in early 199 BC, he marched his army west from his capital of Pella. It was difficult to know which route Galba would use to invade; history doesn't record whether Philip had scouts watching every valley, but it would have made sense to do so.

In the event, Galba chose the Apsus Valley. Philip rushed to defend it, but Rome's legions smashed past his phalanx and into western Macedon. Although the defeat was incomplete – Philip's army escaped almost entirely – this was a

# MACEDON AND ITS NEIGHBOURS IN 202BC


THRACE
MACEDON
ILLYRIA
Antipatreia
Apollonia
Pella
KINGDOM OF PERGAMUM
Pergamum
Cynoscephalae
Demetrias
EPIRUS
SELEUCID KINGDOM
Chios
AETOLIAN LEAGUE
Chalcis
CARIA
Athens
ACHAEAN LEAGUE
Acrocorinth
Rhodes
Olympia
Sparta
Knossos
CRETE
Battle site
Kingdom of Macedon
Macedonian client state
Roman protectorates
Kingdom of Pergamum
Seleucid Kingdom
Independent state
Egyptian possession

Under Philip II and his son Alexander the Great, Macedon rose to a position of pre-eminence never equalled by any Greek city state before or after. By the late third century BC, the kingdom had seen better days. That said, although it was much reduced in size, it remained the dominant military power in Greece and continued to exert huge influence over the region. Naturally, this made it unpopular. Macedon ruled the central region of Thessaly, and through three well-situated fortresses (Chalcis, Demetrias and the Acrocorinth, the so-called 'Fetters of Greece') exerted military control over the area around Athens, as well as on the Peloponnese peninsula. Macedon also ruled part of the coastline of Asia Minor, as well as some of the islands in the Aegean Sea.

The rest of Greece remained divided into city states, small powers ruled by their own citizens. It's important to stress here that there was almost no sense of 'Greekness' at this time. People identified themselves by the place they lived in, and were often at odds with those from other towns or city states. Powers such as Athens and Sparta, which had ruled supreme centuries before, were but shadows of their former selves. Thebes no longer existed, having been crushed by Alexander, and Corinth lay under Macedonian control. Aetolia, in west-central Greece, was one of the stronger city states, and a bitter enemy of Macedon. Other powers included Argos, Elis and Messenia on the Peloponnese, tiny Acarnania in southwest Greece,and Boeotia, the latter two both being allied to Macedon.

GETTY X1 ALAMY X1

◀ pivotal moment in the war, when the extraordinarily manoeuvrable Roman maniple proved itself superior to the rigidly structured phalanx.

Galba's army marched eastward in search of Philip's host, and a game of cat and mouse ensued through the summer, with each side seeking battle on its own terms. A victory for the Romans at Ottolobus, when Philip almost lost his life recklessly leading his Companion Cavalry against the enemy, was countered by a Macedonian win at Pluinna. Sadly, the locations of both Ottolobus and Pluinna have been lost to history.

The harvest of 199 BC arrived without a conclusive outcome. Galba, far from his base of Apollonia, with his supply lines at risk of being cut by snow or the Macedonians, took the sensible option and retreated to the Illyrian coast.

## THE NEW COMMANDER

In many ways, the politics of 2,000 years ago were no different to today: the new man always likes to take control. Although it was common in the mid-Republic for a general to be left in command of the war he was prosecuting, Galba found himself supplanted by the current consul, Villius, soon after his return to Apollonia. Villius in turn was replaced only a few months later, in early 198 BC, by the brand-new consul, Titus Quinctius Flamininus. Thirty years old – a young age to be in command of a large army – he was a formidable figure who took the invasion in his stride. A lover of all things Hellenic, he could speak and write Greek, something unusual for Romans of the time.

Flamininus decided to try a different valley to Galba, that of the River Aous. He found his path blocked by Philip's phalanx and an impressive series of defences, leading to a 40-day stand-off during which the Romans must have mounted many unsuccessful attacks. A dramatic meeting between Flamininus and Philip took place during this time,

Continues on p110

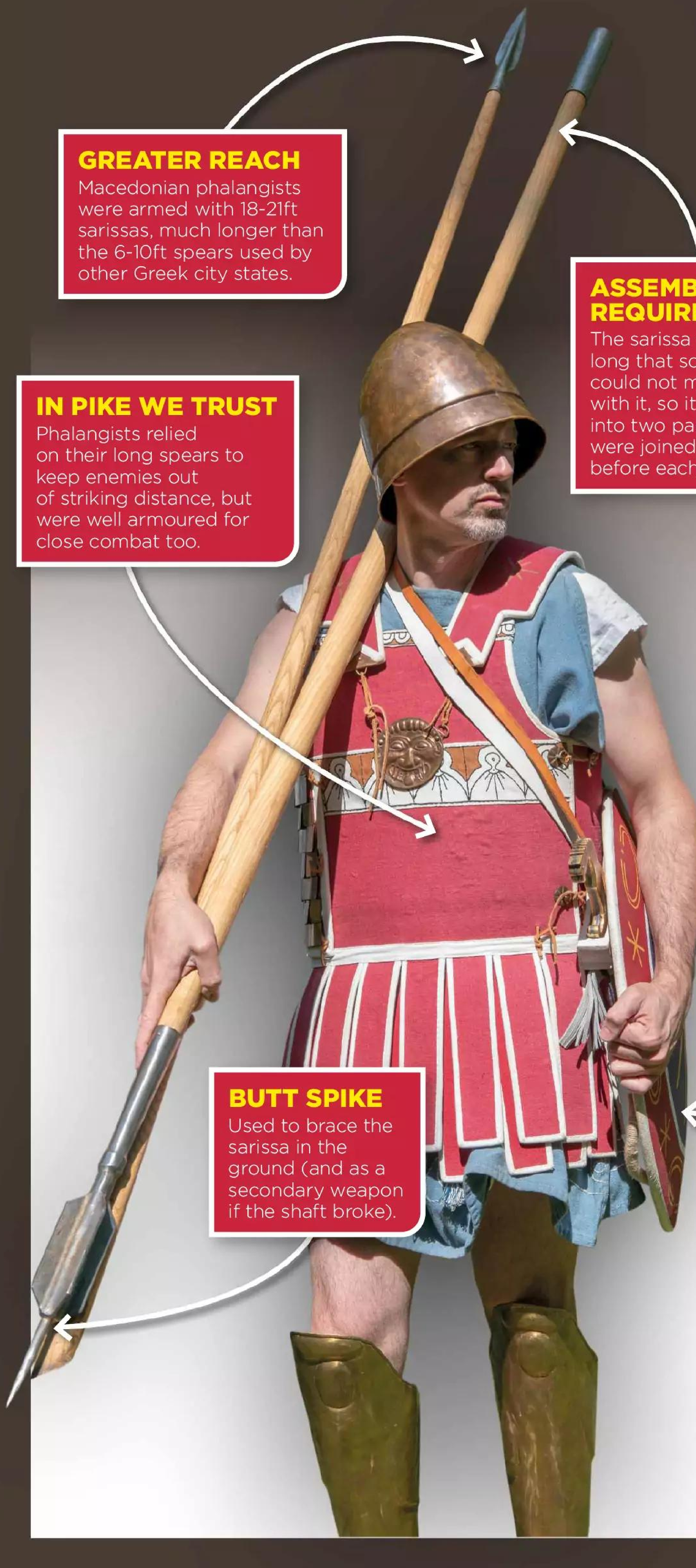
The fortress of the Acrocorinth, one of Macedon's trio of 'fetters', looms over a ruined temple in Corinth

# PHALANX VS LEGION

What's the difference between the distinctive formations of the Macedonian and Roman armies?

## MACEDONIAN PHALANX

**▼ The saying "A fox knows many tricks; a hedgehog one good one", attributed to the Greek poet Archilochus, may have referred to the phalanx, the staple formation of Hellenistic armies. This was a massed concentration of spear-wielding soldiers, often eight ranks deep and 500 to 1,500 strong. The Macedonian phalanx tended to be 16 ranks deep, and made up of sub-units of 256 men. The sheer volume of spear tips made any phalanx almost invincible from the front, but weak on the flanks. It was also slow to advance, difficult to manoeuvre, and fared poorly on uneven ground.**



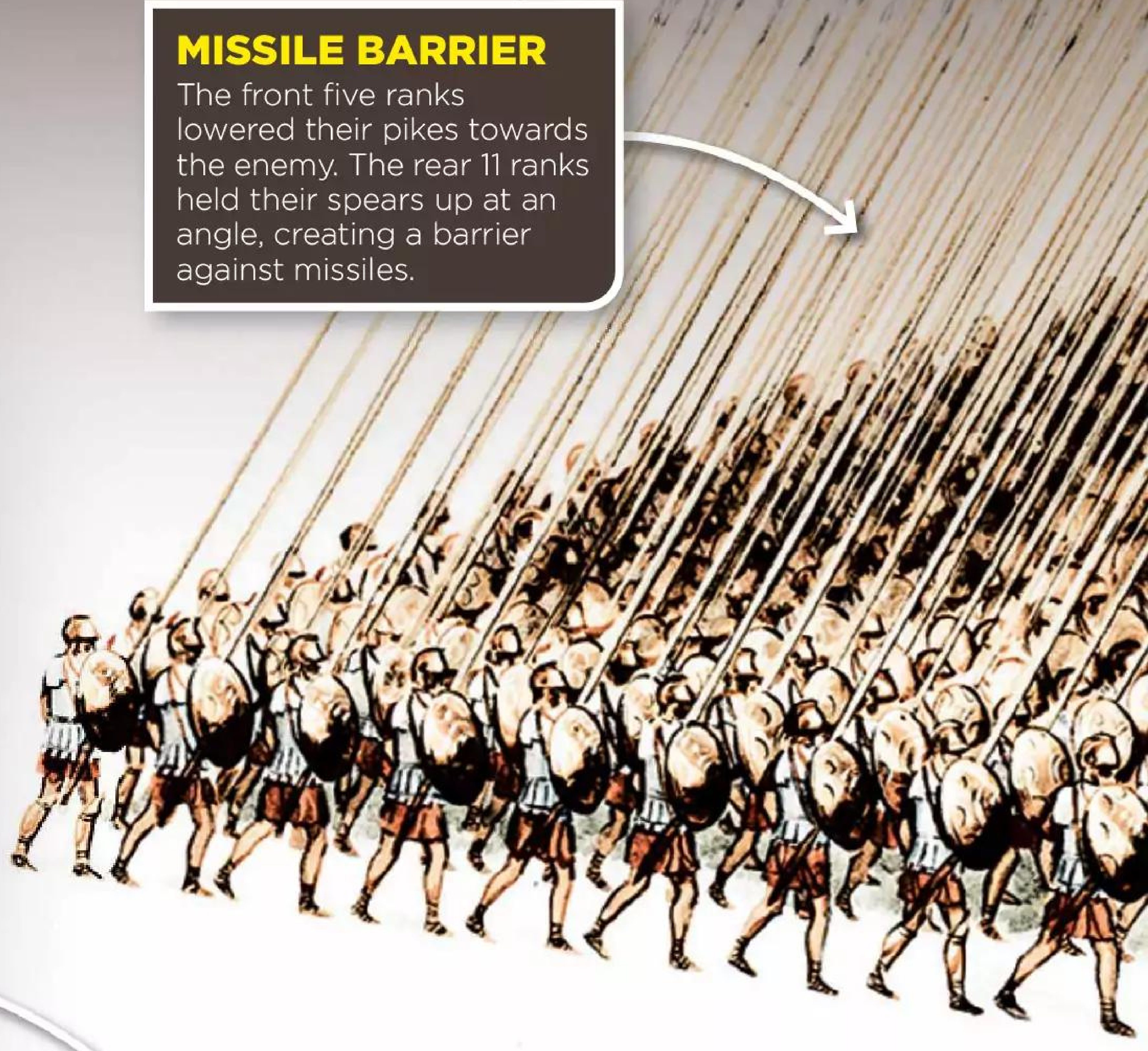
**GREATER REACH**
Macedonian phalangists were armed with 18-21ft sarissas, much longer than the 6-10ft spears used by other Greek city states.

**ASSEMBLY REQUIRED**
The sarissa was so long that soldiers could not march with it, so it was split into two parts that were joined together before each battle.

**IN PIKE WE TRUST**
Phalangists relied on their long spears to keep enemies out of striking distance, but were well armoured for close combat too.

**BUTT SPIKE**
Used to brace the sarissa in the ground (and as a secondary weapon if the shaft broke).

**STRAPPED SHIELD**
Because the pike had to be wielded with two hands, the phalangist's shield was attached to the left arm and also by a strap around the neck.



**MISSILE BARRIER**
The front five ranks lowered their pikes towards the enemy. The rear 11 ranks held their spears up at an angle, creating a barrier against missiles.

# ROMAN LEGION

▶ On paper, each legion of the mid-Republic comprised 4,500 men, of which 300 were young noblemen serving as cavalry. The 4,200 foot soldiers were split into four classes according to age and wealth: 1,200 velites, or skirmishers, and 3,000 legionaries, subdivided into 1,200 hastati, 1,200 principes and 600 triarii. The basic unit of the legion was the maniple (a double century). It was 160-men strong, a mix of skirmishers and legionaries. The legion was a more fluid fighting formation than the phalanx, which was to be Philip's undoing.

## DID YOU KNOW?

### LOST IN TRANSLATION

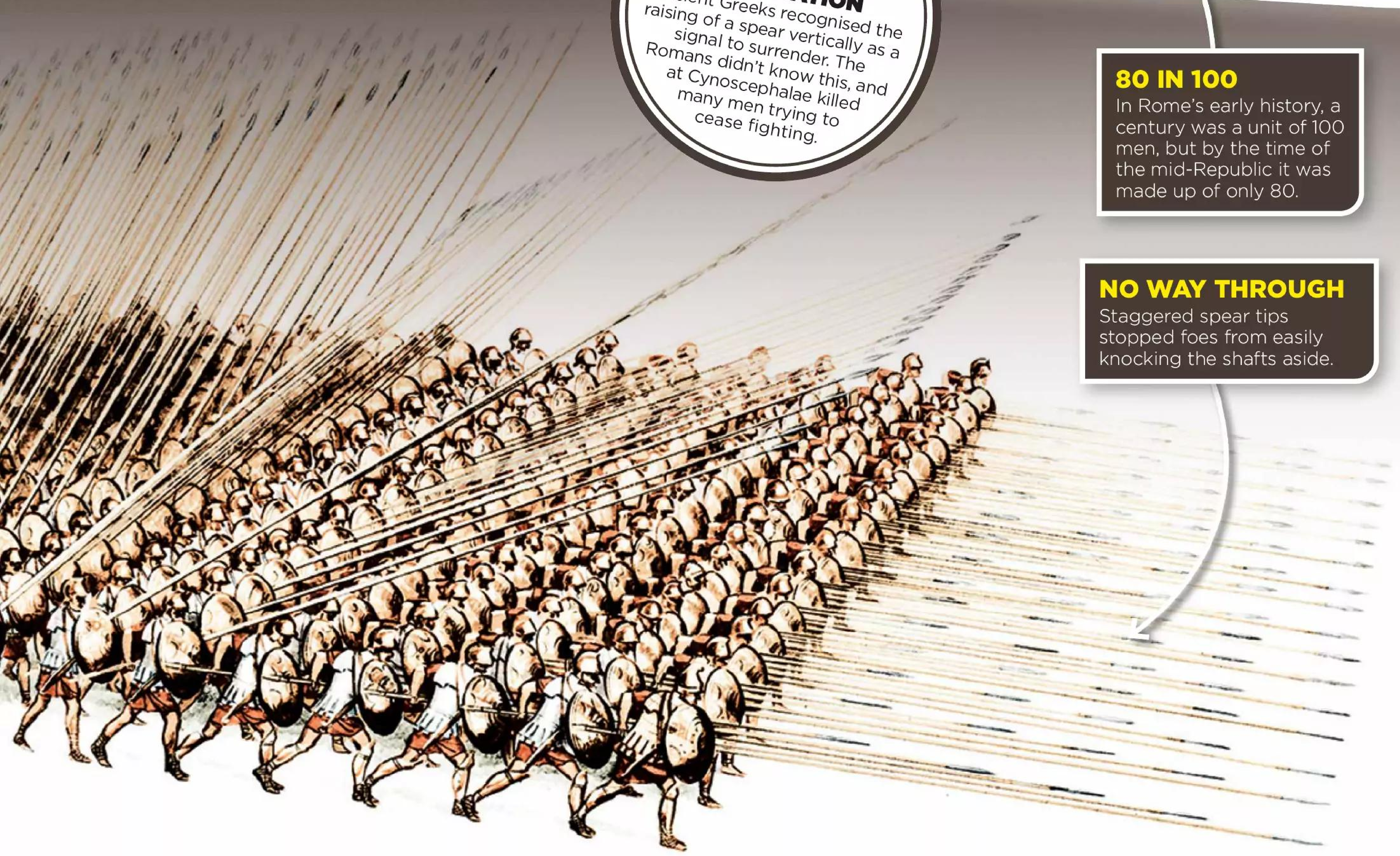
Ancient Greeks recognised the raising of a spear vertically as a signal to surrender. The Romans didn't know this, and at Cynoscephalae killed many men trying to cease fighting.

### 80 IN 100

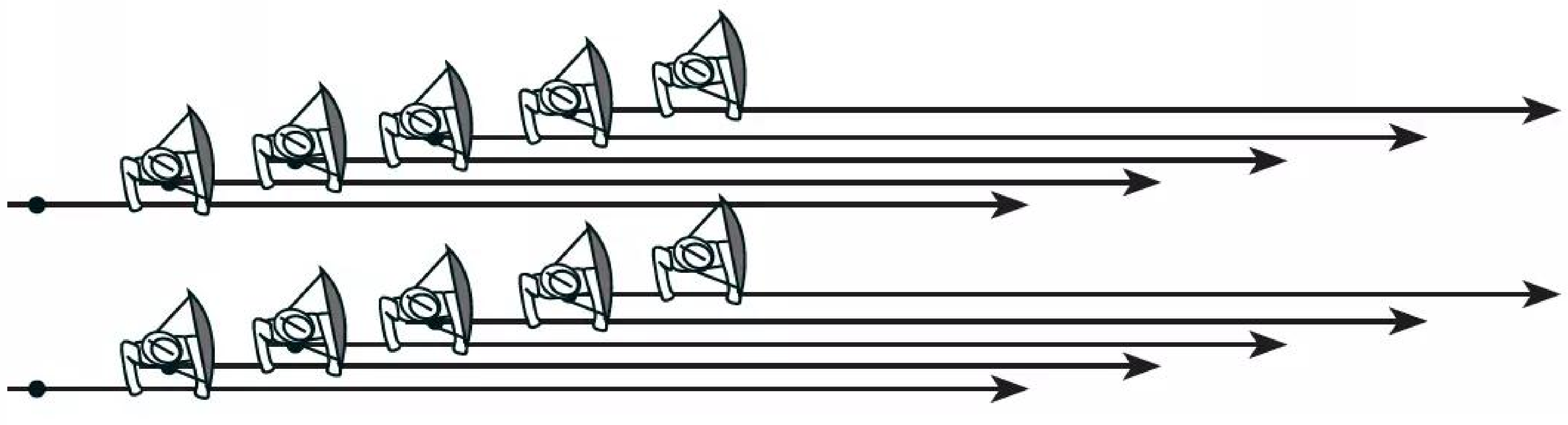
In Rome's early history, a century was a unit of 100 men, but by the time of the mid-Republic it was made up of only 80.

### NO WAY THROUGH

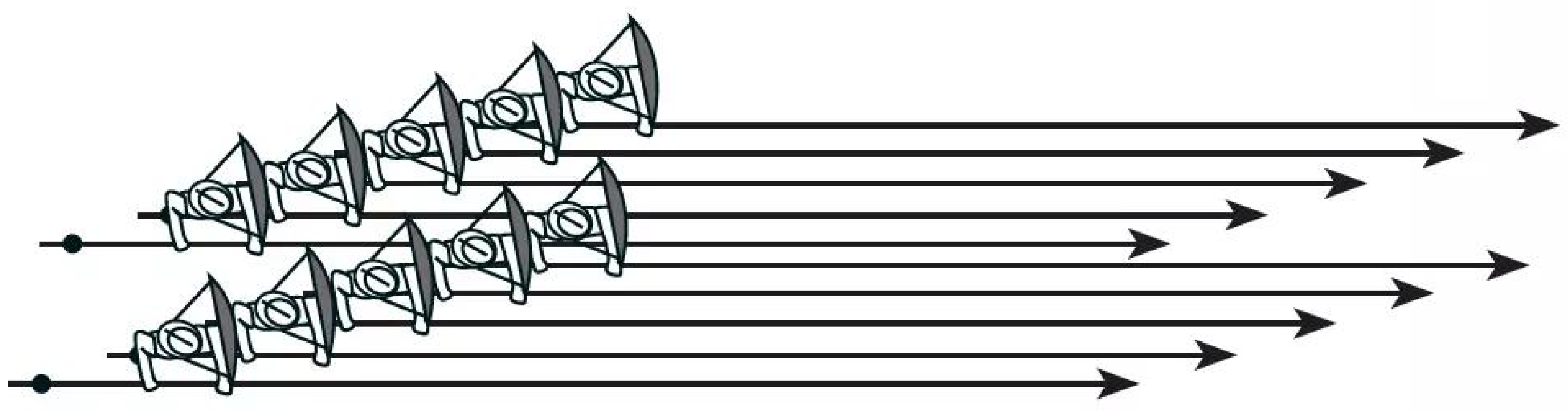
Staggered spear tips stopped foes from easily knocking the shafts aside.



## Close order formation



## Locked shield formation



AKG IMAGES X1, REX/SHUTTERSTOCK X1, COURTESY OF HETAIROI E.V./WWW.HETAIROI.DE

## TERRIFYING TRIVIA FROM A BITTER FEUD

‘Slingers’ were used by many ancient peoples, including the Romans and Macedonians. It was commonplace to carve insults on sling bullets: examples that have been found include “Ouch”, “Take this”, “An unpleasant gift”, and much worse.

The legionary’s gladius hispaniensis (Spanish sword) was lethal. Ancient sources mention that Philip’s soldiers were terrified of the ease with which it removed limbs.

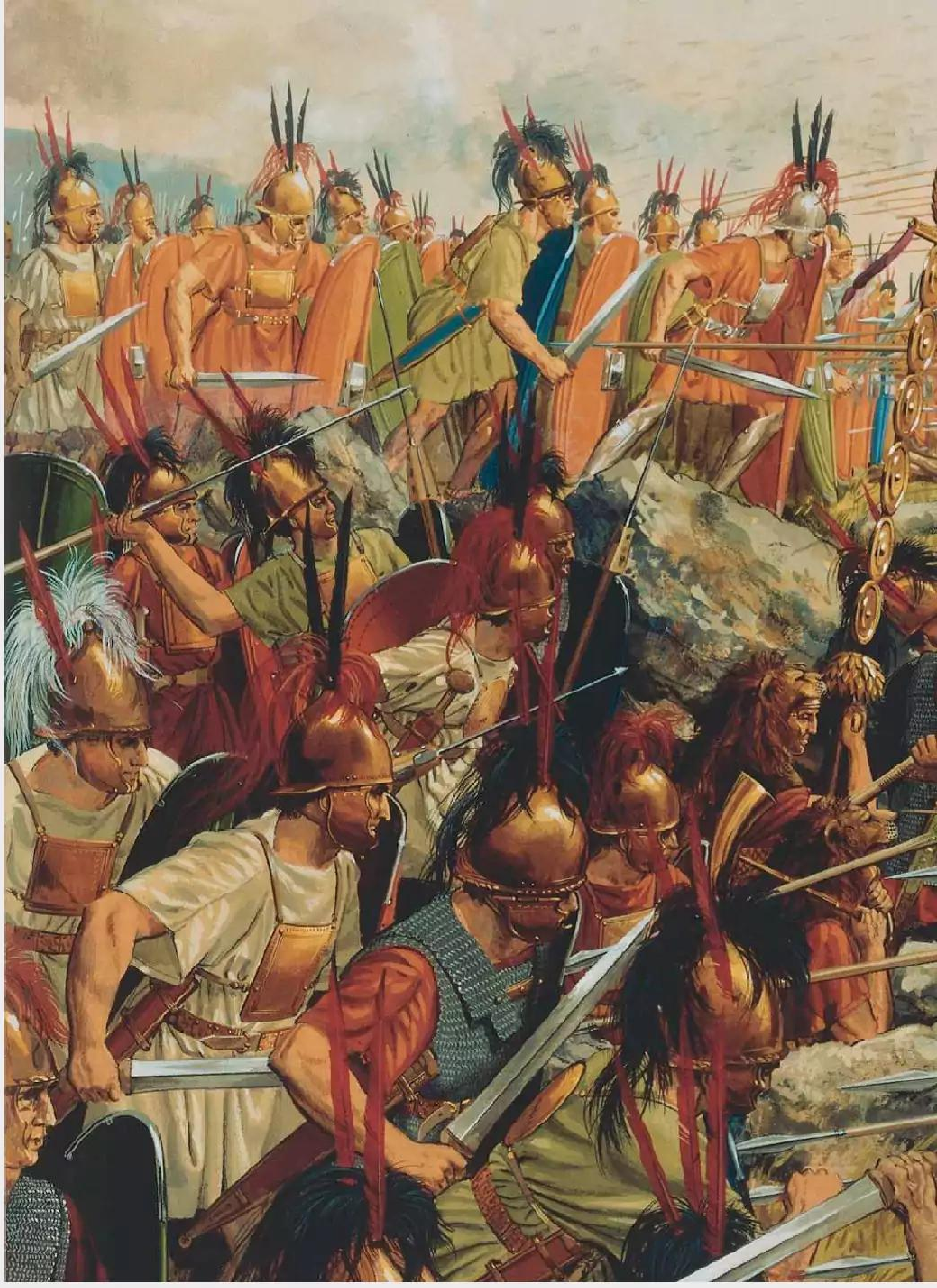
In the late third century BC, it was regarded as unseemly for a Roman magistrate to put his profile on a coin, as it showed aspirations toward kingship. Flamininus did so after his victory over Philip, which makes his confidence – or arrogance – quite remarkable.

Flamininus and Philip met several times during the war. On one occasion, on the coast near Thermopylae, Philip refused to come ashore, preferring to speak to Flamininus from the deck of his ship.

During this time, it was the civic duty of all male Roman citizens aged 16-46 to present themselves for military duty every spring.

Greeks and Macedonians had been quarrelling since before the time of Alexander the Great’s father, Philip II. The famous Athenian orator Demosthenes decried that he was “but a pestilent knave from Macedonia, whence it was never yet possible to buy a decent slave”.

AKG IMAGES X2, GETTY X6

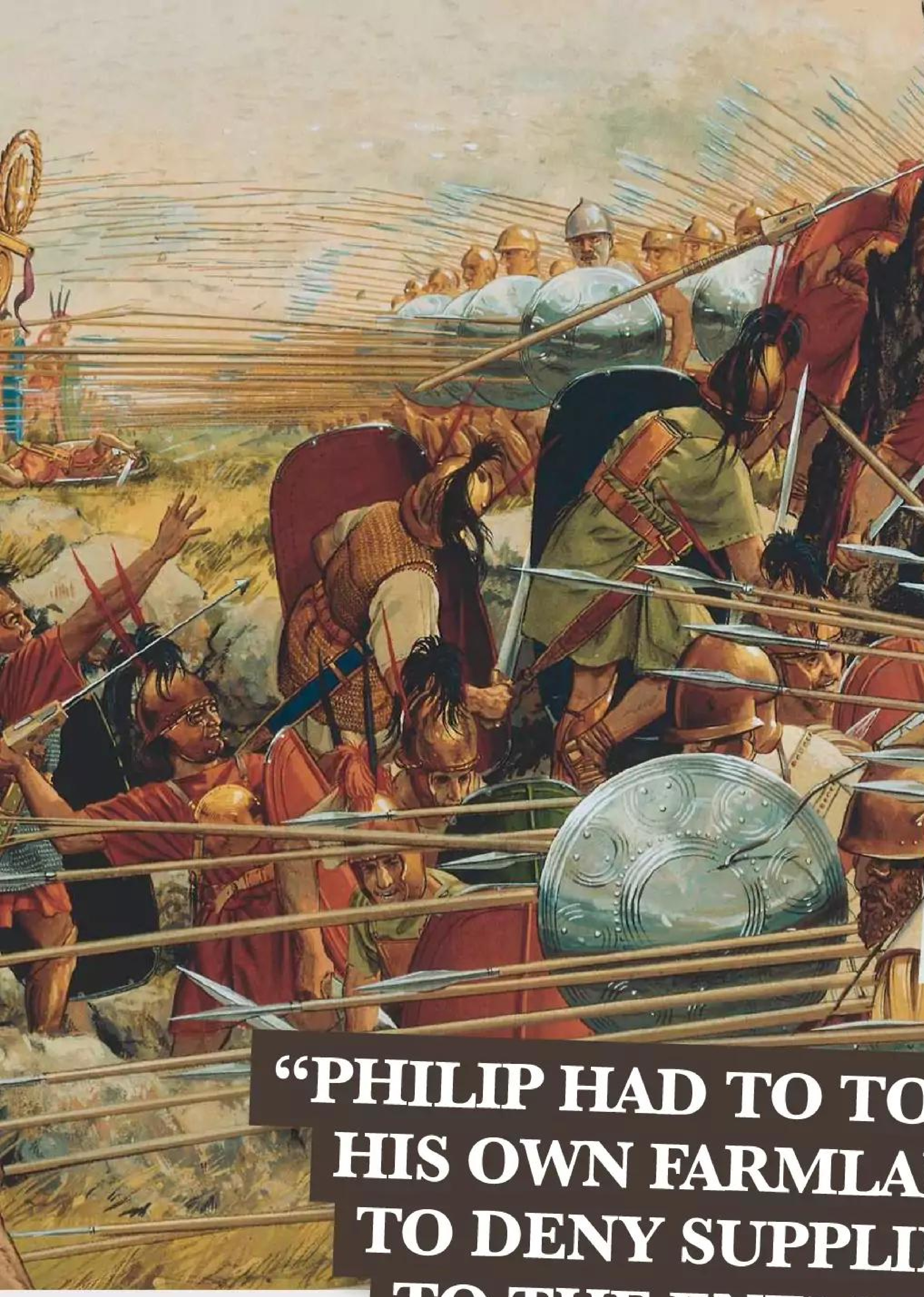


Philip’s son Perseus took Macedon into a third war with Rome; his defeat at Pydna in 168 BC cost the kingdom its independence

◀ across the Aous. The Roman historian Livy records that Flamininus demanded Philip remove his garrisons from all Greek towns and pay reparations to those whose lands he had ravaged: Athens, Pergamum and Rhodes. Unpalatable though these demands were – being issued to a Hellenic king on his own territory by a non-Greek invader – Philip conceded. Unsurprisingly, he balked at Flamininus’ next demand, that he should surrender the towns of Thessaly to their own populations, reversing a legacy of Macedonian control of more than 150 years.

The impasse resumed, but soon after a local guide was found to lead a Roman force up and around the Macedonian positions. Attacked from in front and behind, Philip’s army broke and fled; it was thanks only to the phalanx that a complete slaughter was prevented. Pursued eastward, Philip had to abandon the same Thessaly he had refused to deliver to Flamininus only days before. It was a humiliating moment for the Macedonian King, all the more so as he had to torch his own farmland and towns to deny supplies to the enemy.

Defeat seemed imminent, but redemption was to come from an unexpected quarter. Despite the loss of the strategically important fortress of Gomphi, Philip’s forces proved victorious at another stronghold, Atrax. When the Roman catapults battered a hole in the wall and the legionaries charged in, they were faced by the phalanx in a tightly



This Egyptian pronouncement from 196 BC declares that Flamininus has 'freed' the Greeks, though time would tell a different story

> "PHILIP HAD TO TORCH HIS OWN FARMLAND TO DENY SUPPLIES TO THE ENEMY"

confined space. The sources are silent on details, but what happened there persuaded Flamininus to retreat from Thessaly.

Fine September weather meant that the year's campaign did not come to an end at the usual time. Flamininus's considerable successes saw the Greek city states, many of which had been playing neutral, move towards the Roman camp – or in the case of Aetolia and Achaea, join it outright. Several towns in Boeotia fell to the legions, and the mighty fortress of the Acrocorinth was besieged by a combined force of Romans, Pergamenes and Achaeans. This attack failed, but it signalled the end of Philip's ability to retain territories outside Macedon. The future looked bleak.

## CRISIS OF CONFERENCE

In likely recognition of this, Philip agreed to a conference with Flamininus and his allies in November 198 BC. It also suited the wily Flamininus to negotiate, because in Rome, consular elections were around the corner. If he was to be replaced (as he had done to Villius) then a peace treaty with Philip was the best option; if his command was renewed, on the other hand, Flamininus could fight Macedon to a finish.

Three days of heated negotiations without agreement saw Philip request to send an embassy to Rome; he would abide, he said, by the decision of the Senate. Flamininus agreed, knowing full well that once there, Philip would be asked to surrender the three fortresses that protected Macedon to the south – the so-called 'Fetters of Greece', Acrocorinth, Chalcis and Demetrias. And so it proved. Flamininus' command was renewed, and Philip's outwitted ambassadors could not agree to the Senate's demand to evacuate the Fetters. Both parties retired for the winter.

In spring 197 BC, the war resumed. Rather than in mountain valleys, this year the fighting would take place in Thessaly. By May, both armies were marching towards each other on the coast. Taking account of his allies, Flamininus had about 26,000 men; Philip's troops were of similar strength, including 16,000 phalangists.

Skirmishes and manoeuvring saw both parties march westward, separated by a range of hills. As is often the case with battles of vital importance, the fighting began by accident when Flamininus's scouts clashed with Philip's advance force in bad weather, atop the hills of Cynoscephalae. Reinforcements were sent by both sides as the skirmish spiralled out of control and, before long, both commanders had deployed their armies.

## THE PHALANX FALTERS

Unhappy with the ground and lacking half of his phalanx (which was out scouting), Philip went to battle reluctantly. At first, things went well, with his phalangists driving the Roman left flank down the hillside towards their own camp. Victory might have seemed possible, but things changed fast when Flamininus led his right flank up towards the second half of Philip's phalanx, which had arrived late to the battle. Panicked by the Romans' elephants, these disorganised phalangists broke and ran.

Misfortune then turned into disaster for Philip when a quick-thinking Roman officer broke away from Flamininus' position with several thousand legionaries and attacked the exposed flank and rear of the remaining half of the phalanx. Unable to defend themselves, the phalangists were slain in large numbers; the rest fled the field.

The defeat did not see Philip removed from his throne by Flamininus. Rome was well aware of the threat posed by the wild peoples to the north of Macedon and the Seleucid Empire to its east. Philip could serve nicely as a buffer, while also paying reparations and sending one of his sons to Rome as a hostage.

Effectively, Cynoscephalae signalled the end of Macedonian and Greek independence. The city states that had allied themselves to the Republic would realise this too late, and just a year later, in 196 BC, the Aetolians lamented how the Romans had unshackled the feet of the Greeks only to put a collar around their necks. ⊙

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**BEN KANE** is a best-selling author who specialises in historical fiction. His books include *Clash of Empires* (Orion, 2018), set during the Roman invasion of Macedon

# THE LEGEND OF TROY

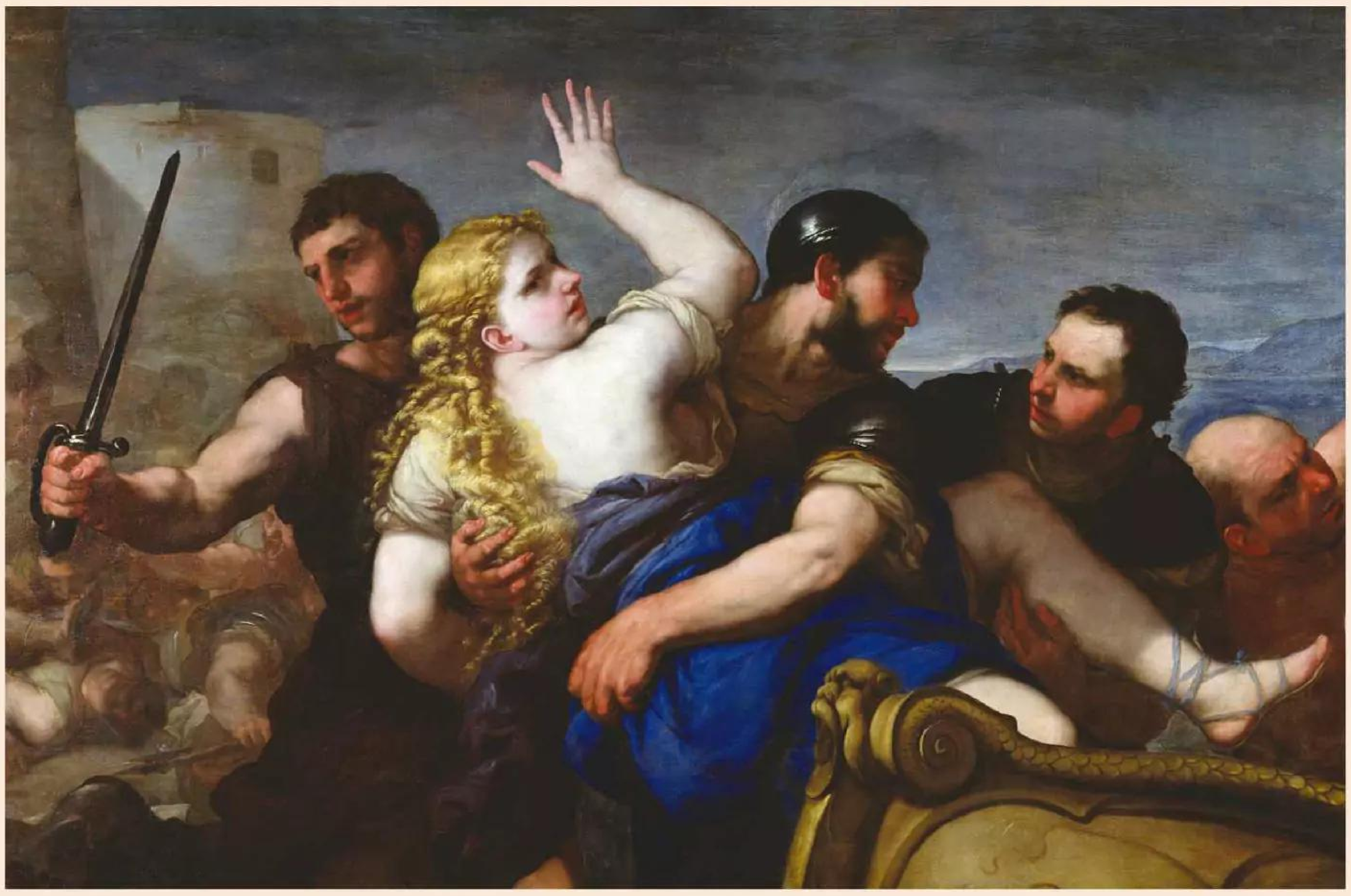
Mighty warriors, the world's most beautiful woman, divine intervention and a giant wooden horse – the Trojan War is one of ancient history's greatest stories but, asks **Michael Scott**, how much of the legend is actually true?

ALAMY X3, SHUTTERSTOCK X1

Achilles bound together the heels of the man he had just slain in single combat – Hector, hero of the Trojans – and tied the lifeless body to his chariot. He climbed aboard and encouraged his horses to move, dragging his fallen foe around and around the walls of Troy so that all inside could see the fate that had befallen their bravest and noblest of protectors. Following that humiliation, Achilles rode back to the Greek camp, where, for the next 12 days, he further desecrated Hector's body by refusing the proper burial rituals. It required the intervention of the gods before Achilles returned Hector to his father for a funeral.

The account is one of the most chilling – not only for the death of a warrior in combat, but the disrespect shown to his body – in the text of Homer's *Iliad*, an epic poem about the Greeks' fateful attempts to besiege the city of Troy. The scene has everything that, for ancient Greeks and Trojans, was both best and worst about war. It offered Achilles the opportunity for eternal glory by defeating Troy's greatest warrior, while showing how war could lead to humanity putting aside its most basic principles and risk becoming something less than human. The gods themselves are needed to remind Achilles of this.

Homer's *Iliad* is a tale of bloodshed, conquest, struggle, loss, fate, heroism and glory, centred within the Greeks' legendary ten-year campaign. It was a war waged supposedly because of one action: the Trojan prince Paris stealing away Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world and wife to Menelaus, King of Sparta. To right that wrong, Menelaus, aided by other Greek kings and warriors, including his brother Agamemnon, Odysseus, Ajax and Achilles, sailed with a huge force to Troy and went to war against Paris, his brother Hector, their father Priam, and the rest of the Trojan people.

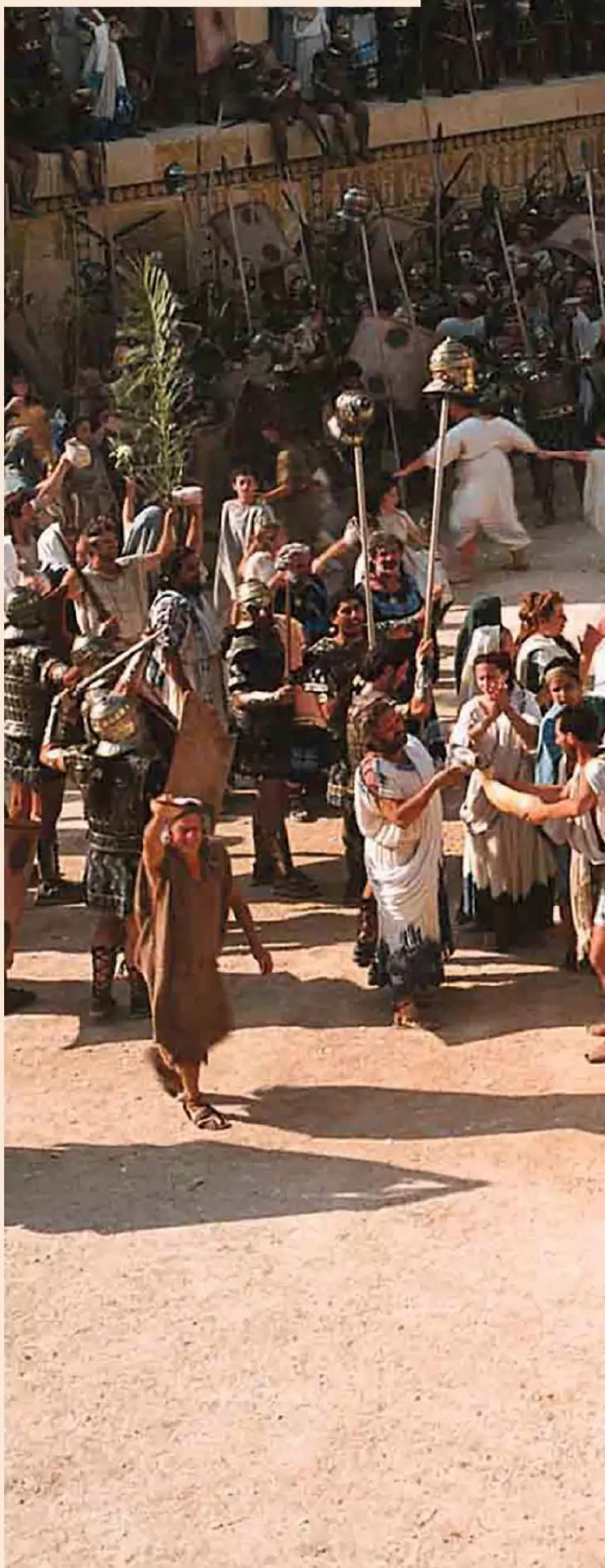


The Trojan prince Paris's abduction of Helen sparked a ten-year war, according to the Homeric tales

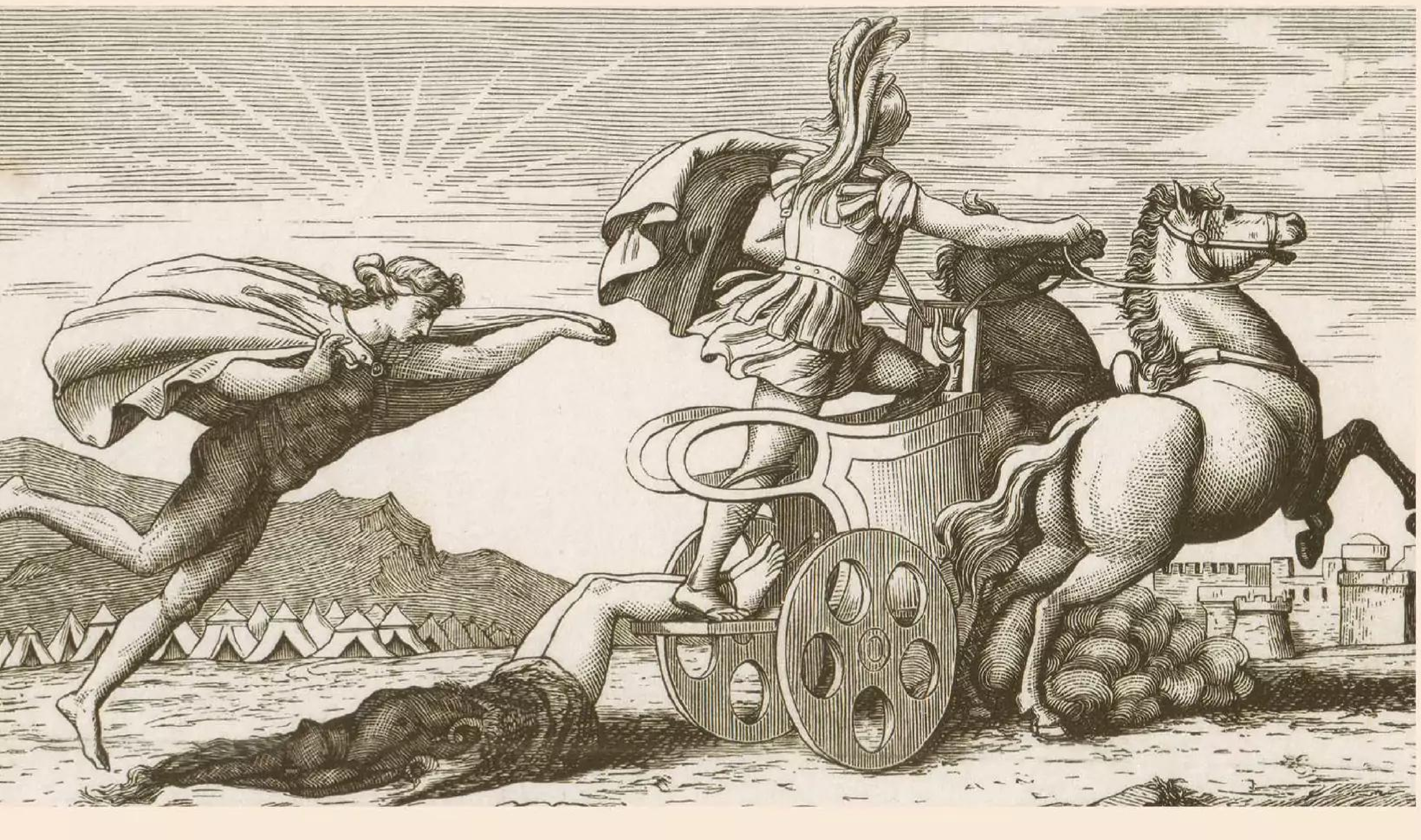
## BEWARE THE GREEKS

How the war ended is the most famous element of the story. The Greeks, unable to gain a clear victory on the battlefield – even after Achilles killed Hector – turned instead to a cunning trick. They built a large wooden horse, hid some of their best fighters inside and left it as a 'propitiatory gift' for the Trojans, before ▶

ALAMY X1, GETTY IMAGES X2



Achilles drags the body of Hector behind his chariot, but the gods protect it from physical mutilation

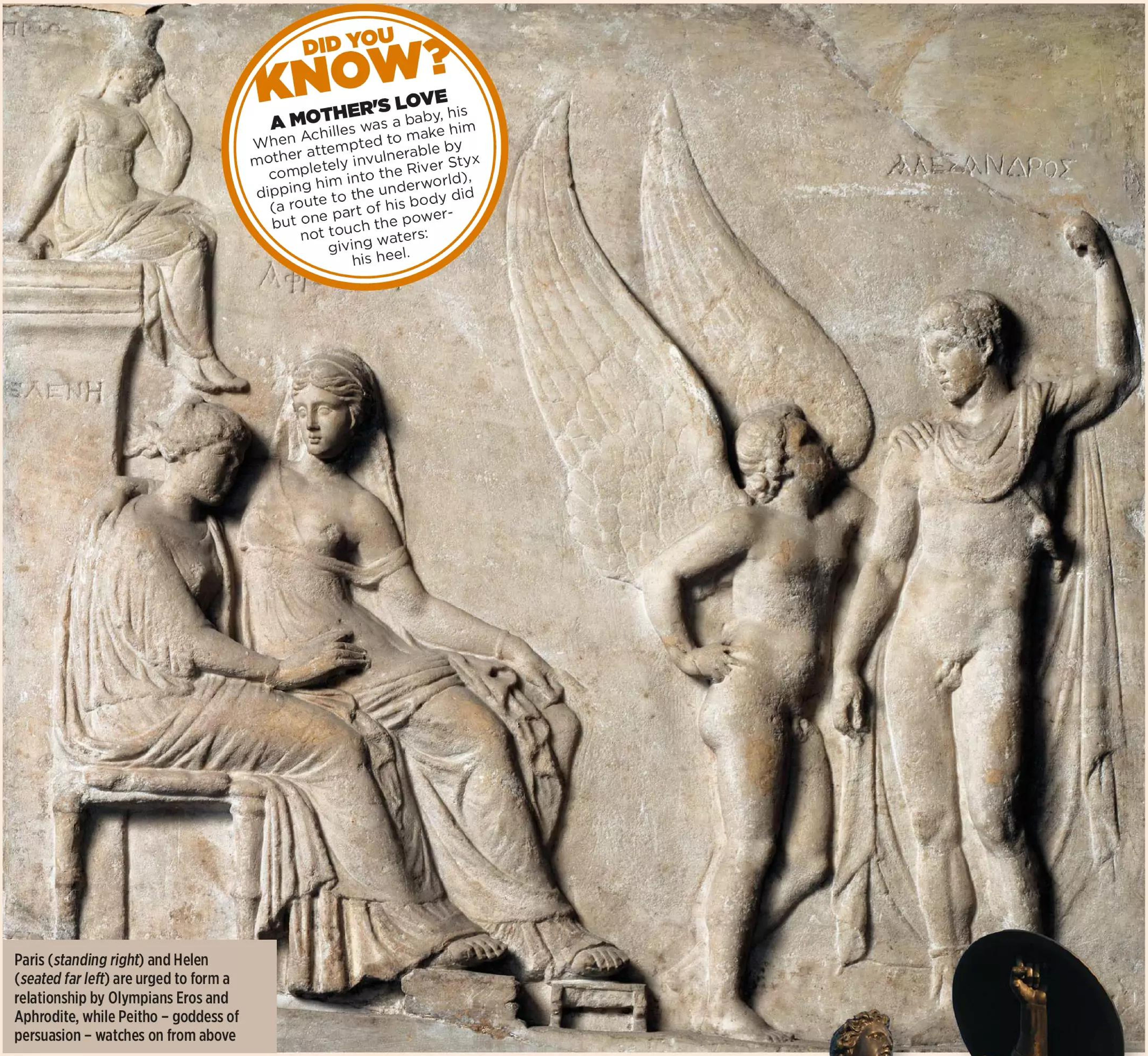


The Trojan Horse – seen in the 2004 film *Troy* – was received as a gift by the Trojan people, but it was a ploy to ensure their doom

## DID YOU KNOW?

**HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT**

The Trojan priest Laocoön and Cassandra, daughter of King Priam, warned that the wooden horse was a Greek trick and called for it to be destroyed. The Trojans ignored them and suffered the consequences.



### DID YOU KNOW?

**A MOTHER'S LOVE**

When Achilles was a baby, his mother attempted to make him completely invulnerable by dipping him into the River Styx (a route to the underworld), but one part of his body did not touch the power-giving waters: his heel.

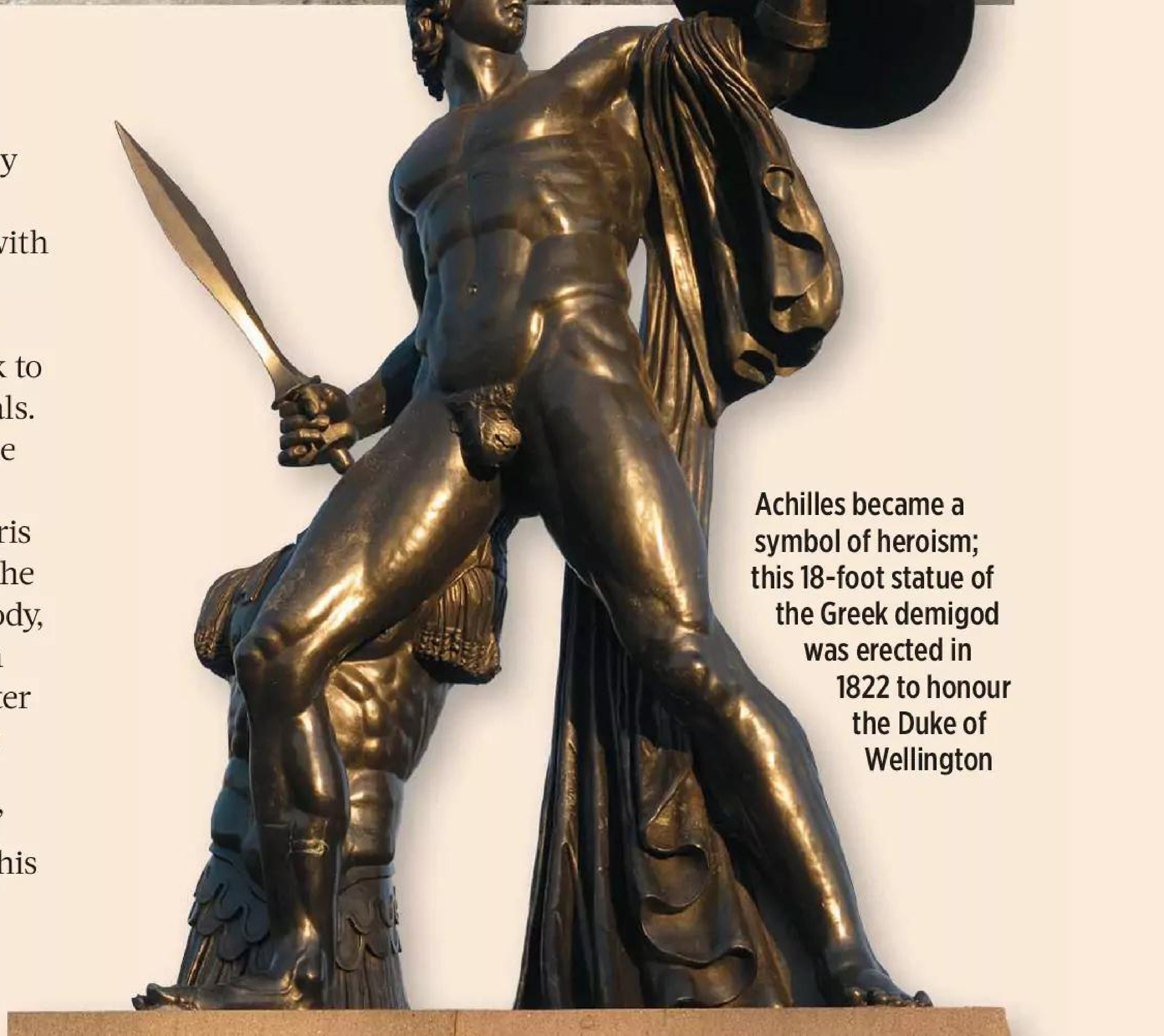
Paris (*standing right*) and Helen (*seated far left*) are urged to form a relationship by Olympians Eros and Aphrodite, while Peitho – goddess of persuasion – watches on from above

◀ packing up their camp and seemingly sailing away. Believing the war to be won, the Trojans moved the horse inside the city walls, intending to use it to honour the gods.

That night, the hidden Greeks climbed out, killed the guards and opened the city gates to allow the entire Greek force to swarm in. Priam, King of Troy, was slaughtered along with every Trojan male – adult and child – while the women and girls were enslaved. The Greeks burned Troy to the ground. As for Helen, the face that launched a thousand ships, her husband Menelaus had insisted that he be the one to kill her, but he became overwhelmed by her beauty once again and could not bring himself to do it.

The Trojan Horse trick signalled the end of the war and is remembered as one of history's most infamous military manoeuvres. Yet it was not actually mentioned by Homer. The *Iliad* ends with Hector's death and funeral, when the gods finally convinced Achilles to stop disrespecting the body and give it back to the Trojans for the proper funeral rituals.

A lot happened between that and the Greeks' building of the wooden horse. Achilles himself had been killed by Paris after being shot by an arrow through the heel, the only vulnerable part of his body, hence the expression 'Achilles heel'. In turn, Paris would also meet his end after being hit by an arrow, fired by a Greek warrior. Two other Greeks, Odysseus and Ajax, managed to retrieve Achilles' body, but they ended up fighting over his



Achilles became a symbol of heroism; this 18-foot statue of the Greek demigod was erected in 1822 to honour the Duke of Wellington

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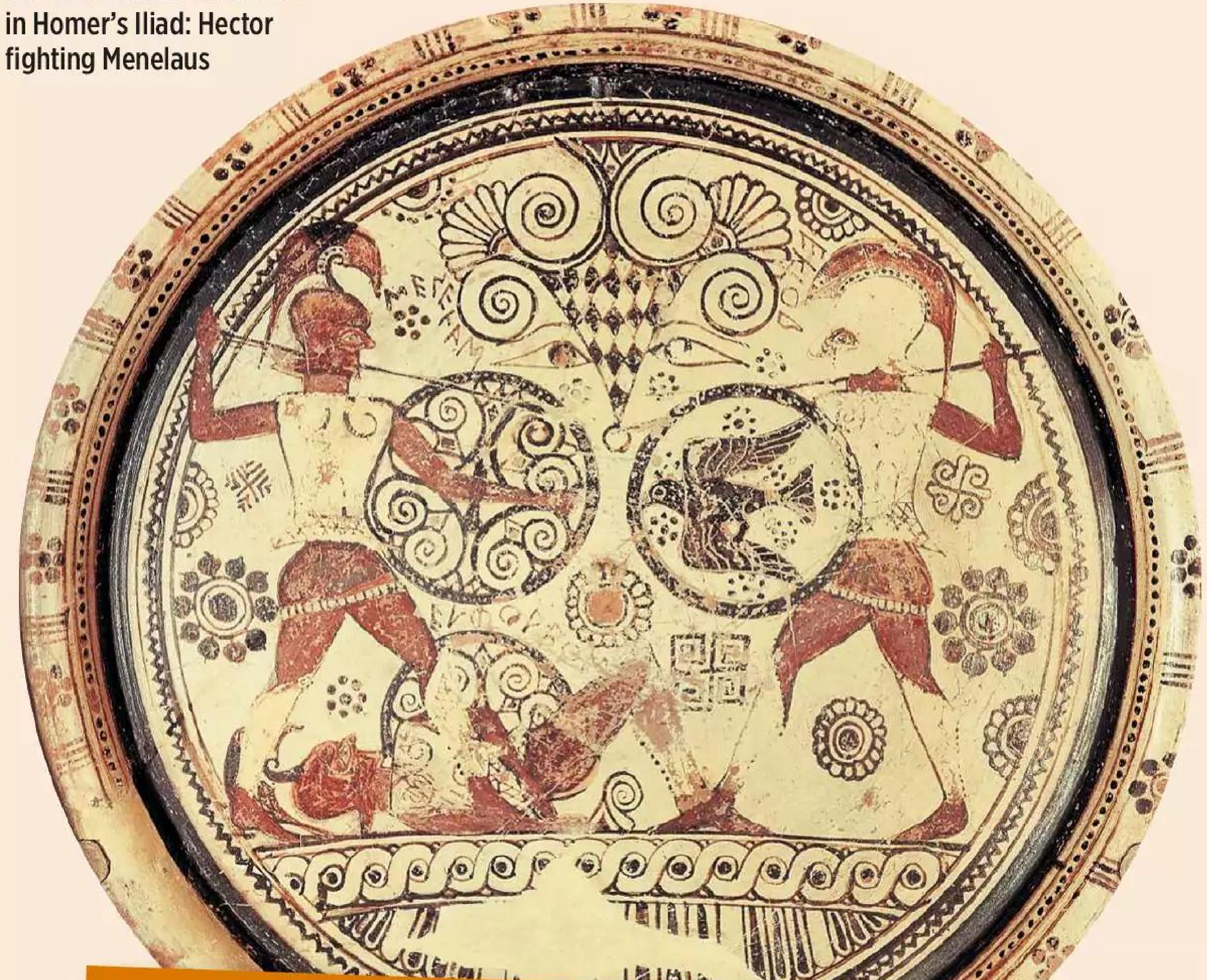


This c600 BC plate shows one of combats mentioned in Homer's Iliad: Hector fighting Menelaus

> "THE ENTIRETY OF THE ILIAD FOCUSES ON JUST A FEW WEEKS IN THE FINAL YEAR OF WAR"

armour and the loser, Ajax, went mad and committed suicide. All such accounts of what happened after the fall of Hector come from sources other than the *Iliad*.

In fact, the epic poem does not start at the beginning of the ten-year tale either, with Paris's abduction of Helen. The entirety of the *Iliad* – 15,693 lines of verse – focuses on just a few weeks in the final year of the Trojan War.

## ANGER OF ACHILLES

Homer's epic tale begins with a disagreement in the Greek camp between the leaders. The demigod Achilles, strongest of them all, feels affronted as he believes he has not been given the degree of honour he deserves from his fellow Greeks, and as such has decided to withdraw from the fight against Troy. He sits on the beach weeping at the injustices done to him, and even prays to the gods that the Greeks will suffer at the hands of the Trojans without him, so that they will be forced to realise his worth. Zeus, king of the gods, agrees to Achilles' demand, and the Greek forces are unable to make any progress against the Trojans.

The many gods of Olympus have all picked sides in the fight, with some supporting the Greeks and others on the side of Troy. As the battle rages, several gods intervene as they protect their side or harm the other. When Achilles withdraws, though, Zeus finally forbids the other gods to get involved and the Trojans, led by Hector, sweep down to the Greek encampment and are on the verge of setting fire to their ships. It is at this desperate point that the Greek leaders plead with Achilles to return to the fight. He still refuses, but he allows his closest companion, Patroclus, to wear his armour on the battlefield to inspire the men. But when Patroclus charges into the fray, he confronts Hector and is cut down.

The death sends a grief-stricken Achilles into a rage as he vows vengeance on Hector. With new armour made for him by the god Hephaestus, he rides in his chariot to the walls of Troy and faces the Trojan warrior. Hector ignores warnings from the gods and fights Achilles, during which he is stabbed through the neck and dies.

The events of the rest of the war and indeed how the war came about is told not in Homer, but across a wider cycle of epic poems by other writers. It is from other sources that the 'Judgement of Paris' emerged, claiming that the Trojan prince did not suddenly decide to abduct Helen. The story really began when Eris, goddess of strife and discord, presented a golden apple to be given to the 'fairest' goddess. Three claimed the apple:

Continues on p120

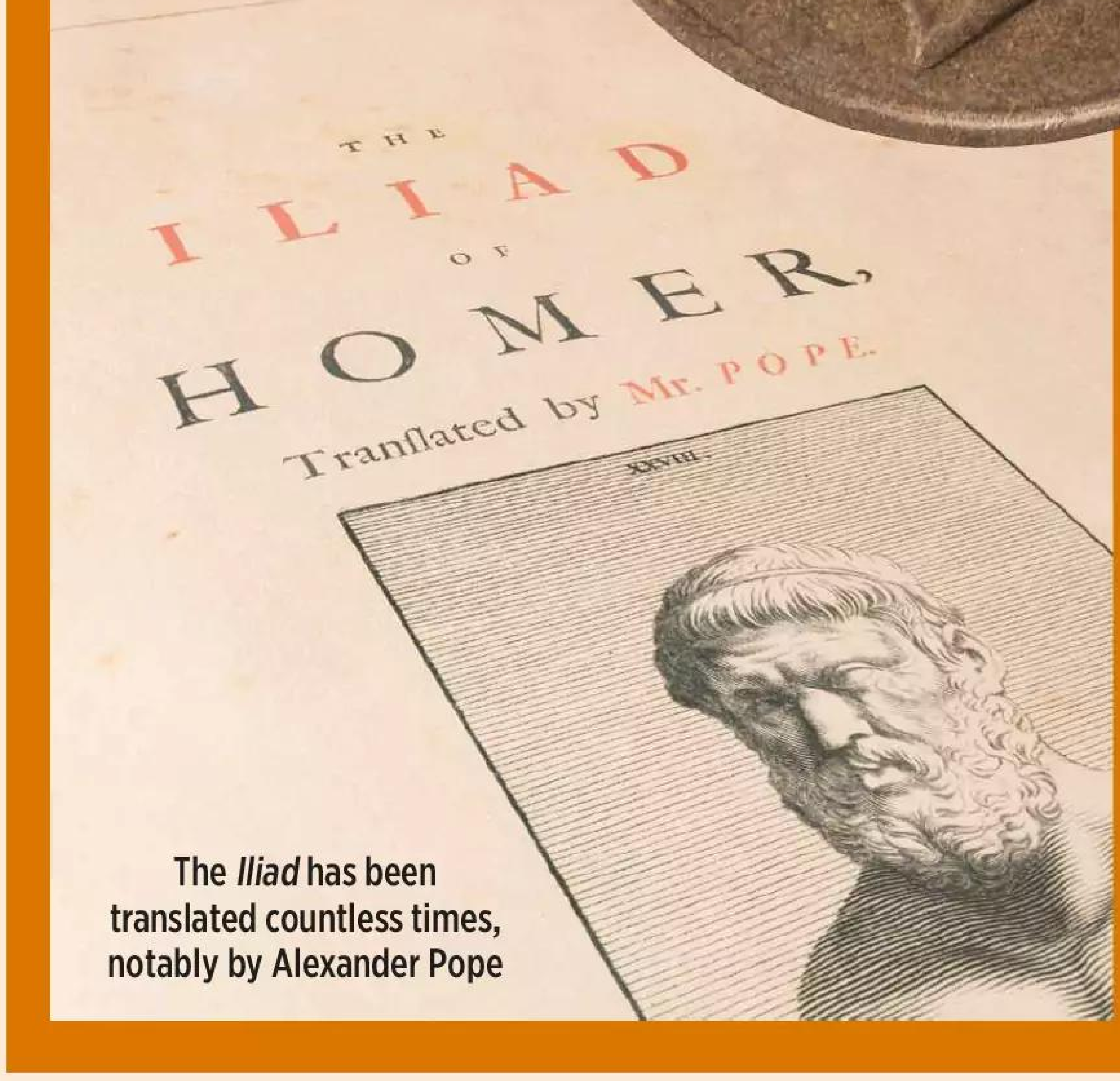
## HOMER: THE POET AND THE ENIGMA

The man named as the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* is as much a myth as the tales he told of warriors, gods and wooden horses. Early records claimed Homer was blind and hailed from the west coast of what is now Turkey, but any firm details are still unknown. Yet Homer became one of the greatest influences on Greek culture and education, and a main source on the Trojan War – despite being thought to have lived in the eighth or ninth century BC, some 500 years after the Trojan War is thought to have occurred.

Homer may have composed and performed his epics for royal courts and festivals. While he would have been one of many oral epic poets over many generations, he came to be regarded as the embodiment of the tradition. Not only did poets and reciters come to style themselves as 'Homeridae', or the 'children of Homer', but later generations ascribed much of oral epic poetry to him. In the sixth century BC, the Athenian tyrant Peisistratus paid for the best of these Homeridae to dictate the Homeric epics for his scribes to write down, helping turn them from an oral to a written art.

So while the real Homer built on a tradition of oral epic poetry that went back generations before him, he came to be seen as the forefather of that tradition.

Such is Homer's legacy that he appeared on Greek coins well into the 20th century



The *Iliad* has been translated countless times, notably by Alexander Pope

# GODS AT WAR

Far from just observing the Trojan War from Mount Olympus, the gods picked sides and got involved

## HERA

In the story of the 'Judgement of Paris', the wife of Zeus was one of three claiming the golden apple for the most beautiful goddess. She offered Paris lordship of Asia, but lost. She supported the Greeks and often tried to help them behind Zeus' back.

## APOLLO

The son of Zeus was a key supporter of the Trojans. He sent plagues on the Greek army, helped Hector on the battlefield to kill Achilles' companion Patroclus, and was one of the most vocal gods to complain to Zeus about Achilles' treatment of Hector's body, which led to Zeus forcing Achilles to allow Hector's burial. Apollo may have also guided the arrow fired by Paris that killed Achilles.

## APHRODITE

The goddess of love won the contest for the golden apple by offering Paris the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen. She remained sympathetic to Paris and, despite not being associated with war, fought herself and was even wounded.

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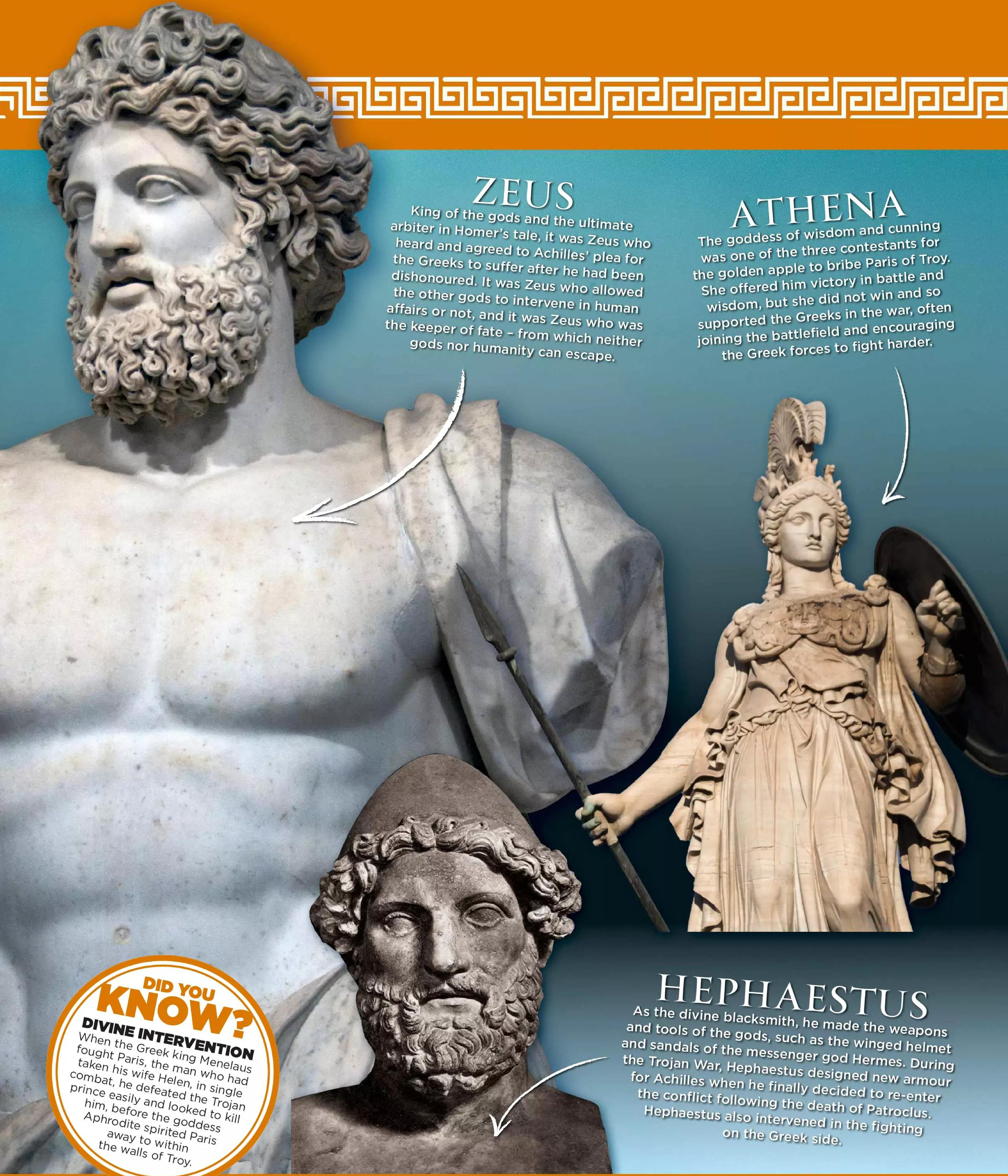


## ZEUS

King of the gods and the ultimate arbiter in Homer's tale, it was Zeus who heard and agreed to Achilles' plea for the Greeks to suffer after he had been dishonoured. It was Zeus who allowed the other gods to intervene in human affairs or not, and it was Zeus who was the keeper of fate – from which neither gods nor humanity can escape.

## ATHENA

The goddess of wisdom and cunning was one of the three contestants for the golden apple to bribe Paris of Troy. She offered him victory in battle and wisdom, but she did not win and so supported the Greeks in the war, often joining the battlefield and encouraging the Greek forces to fight harder.

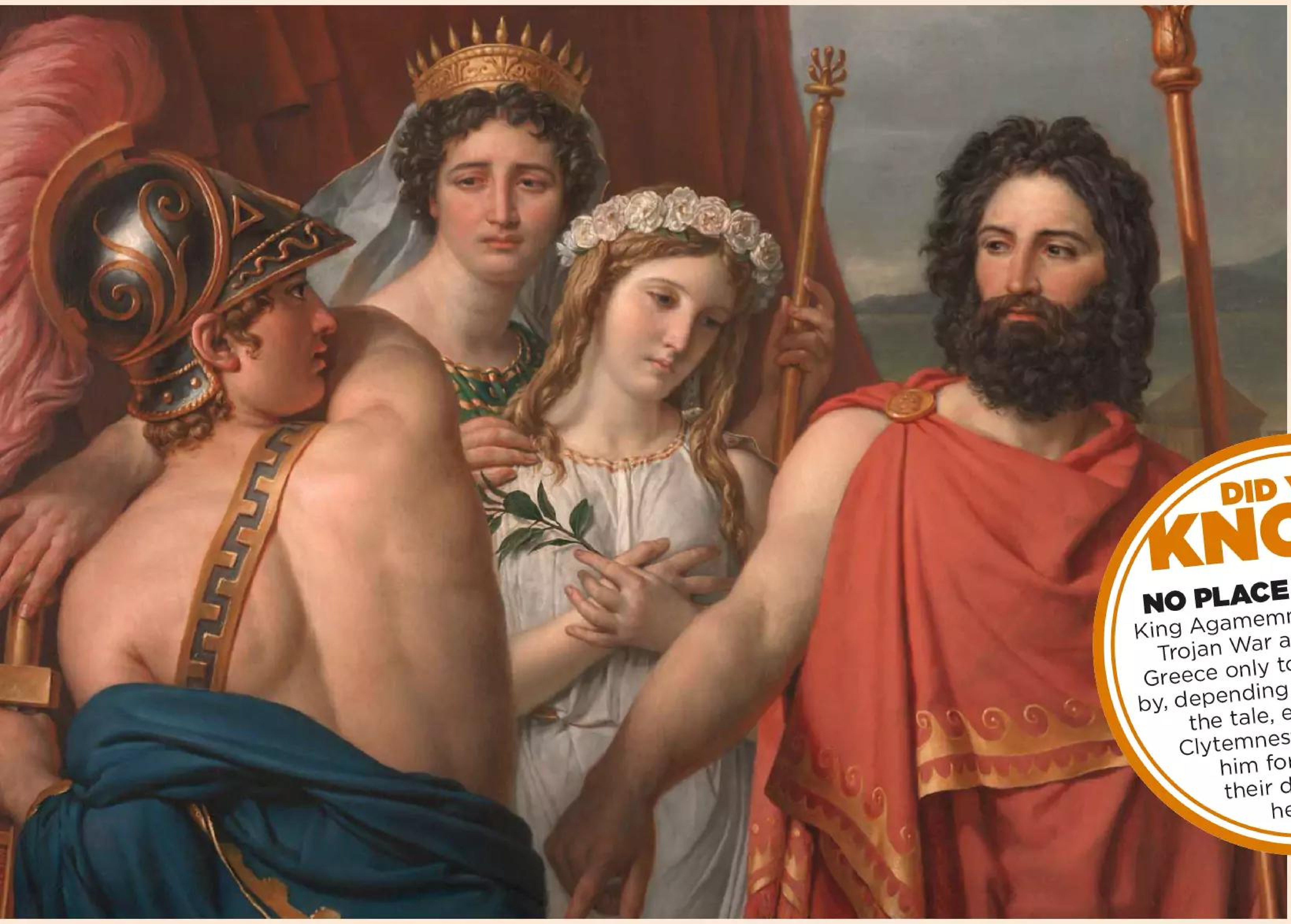
## HEPHAESTUS

As the divine blacksmith, he made the weapons and tools of the gods, such as the winged helmet and sandals of the messenger god Hermes. During the Trojan War, Hephaestus designed new armour for Achilles when he finally decided to re-enter the conflict following the death of Patroclus. Hephaestus also intervened in the fighting on the Greek side.

### DID YOU KNOW?

**DIVINE INTERVENTION**

When the Greek king Menelaus fought Paris, the man who had taken his wife Helen, in single combat, he defeated the Trojan prince easily and looked to kill him, before the goddess Aphrodite spirited Paris away to within the walls of Troy.



For a safe voyage to Troy, King Agamemnon was willing to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia (*centre*)

The ruins of Troy were discovered in 1871; there are many layers of civilisation as well as the one said to be destroyed by the Greeks

DID YOU KNOW?

**NO PLACE LIKE HOME**

King Agamemnon survived the Trojan War and returned to Greece only to be slaughtered by, depending on the version of the tale, either his wife Clytemnestra, who hated him for sacrificing their daughter, or her lover.

◀ Aphrodite, goddess of love; Athena, goddess of wisdom, and Hera, wife of Zeus. It was put to Zeus to decide who should have the apple, but he instead put it to a human to choose: Paris of Troy. All three goddesses attempt to bribe him. Athena promises victory in war and wisdom; Hera with lordship of Asia; and Aphrodite with the hand of the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen of Sparta. Paris awarded the golden apple to Aphrodite, who ensured Helen fell in love with him.

When Helen's husband Menelaus, King of Sparta, found out, he called upon the other Greek kings to join him in winning her back. Hundreds of regions sent their warriors to the first great meeting of the army at Aulis, where they intended to sail for Troy. There, the soothsayers predicted the campaign would take ten years. Sailing for Troy, the fleet mistakenly attacked the wrong place and were beaten back all the way to Greece. It took years to reassemble another fleet at Aulis for a second campaign, but this time, the leader Agamemnon had to appease the goddess Artemis in return for favourable winds to sail to Troy. She demanded the King sacrifice his own daughter, Iphigenia.

With the sacrifice made, the Greek forces sailed again and landed on the beaches near Troy. They did not spend a decade besieging the city, however. They raided up and down the coast and only really settled in to the all-out attack on Troy in the tenth year since they had first left Aulis, as the soothsayers had said. It is over just a few weeks in this final year of the campaign that the action of Homer's *Iliad* takes place.

## THE PLOT THICKENS

There are two elements then to understand about the *Iliad* and the larger story of the Greek campaign against Troy. The first is that Homer was, in many ways, more interested in the human and divine interactions in and around the pressure-cooker of the battlefield at Troy than about the war itself. The first word of the *Iliad* is 'anger' – the anger of Achilles. The focus of much of Homer's tale was on the havoc wreaked on the Greeks by Achilles' bitter feeling that he had not been shown enough recognition.

On the Trojan side, Homer's interest was on the personal relationships and responsibilities felt by the different warriors. Paris wanted to be heroic, but lacked courage to defend his siblings and city. Hector deeply loved his wife, child and city, but as a man of courage and honour could not ignore the call to defend his home to the death. All the warriors fought for their communities and their own personal glory – glory they hoped would be spoken about for all time. The Greeks used the word 'kleos' to encapsulate this sense of immortal renown.

At the same time, the gods were portrayed not as benevolent and just overlords, but as having human tendencies. They fought, they argued, they plotted, they felt jealousy, and they showed support to particular sides. The *Iliad* tells the tale of the painful and glorious overlapping of these divine and human worlds, leaving no character completely without fault – even the heroic Hector ignored clear warnings from the gods – and no character completely without our sympathy either. Readers of the *Iliad* are confronted with a rich, complex, difficult and murky world in which there is no clear right or wrong. It is this tension that makes the *Iliad* one of the greatest works of world literature.

The second element to understand is the extent to which Homer based his tale on fact. Was there really a Trojan War? Ancient writers in the centuries after the composition of Homer's *Iliad* sought to sift fact and fiction, and most believed that the events did happen in large part. The legacy of the war certainly remained present in Greek lives. One region, Locris, continued throughout antiquity to send some of their women each year to act as priestesses of the Temple of Athena at Troy, supposedly to atone for a wrong done by their ancestors during

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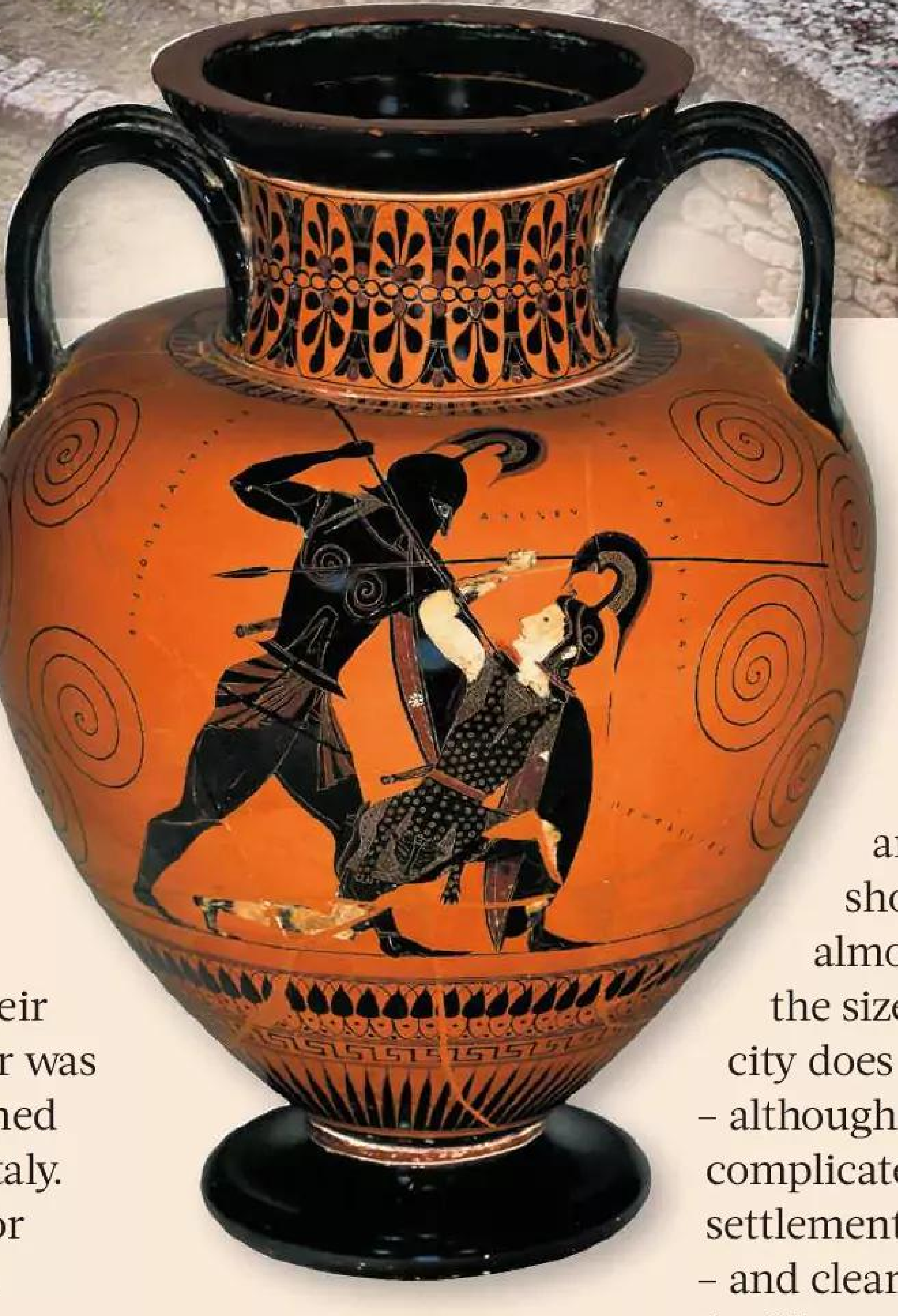

Penthesilea, queen of the Amazons, sided with the Trojans and was killed by Achilles – as depicted on this amphora, which will be displayed at an exhibition at the British Museum

the attacks to take the city. Even a millennium later, Alexander the Great made sure to visit the remains of Troy on his way to conquer Asia, and supposedly picked up Greek armour left there from the time of the war.

The Romans, too, were fascinated with the story. In their own epic tales, their progenitor was a surviving Trojan warrior named Aeneas who made his way to Italy. His legend became the focus for Virgil's epic poem, the *Aeneid*.

## EXCAVATING A MYTH

Modern scholarship has, on the whole, been more sceptical. In the 19th century, the site of what is now believed to be Troy was discovered a the mound of Hisarlik in modern-day Turkey. The excavations, led by a German archaeologist named Heinrich Schliemann, were purported to support the grandeur of Homer's narrative, and Schliemann even claimed to have unearthed the jewellery of Helen and treasures of Priam.

Yet subsequent excavations and historical enquiry have shown that, while the site is almost definitely Troy, it is not of the size recounted by Homer. The city does show signs of destruction – although archaeological efforts were complicated by the existence of multiple settlements laying on top of one another – and clear signs of connection with the Mycenaean world of the Greeks.

In reality, what the site probably indicates is a raid by Mycenaean Greek states on the territory and citadel of Troy in the 13th century BC, which formed nothing more than part of the ongoing military to and fro of the ancient Mediterranean world at the time. This raid became, perhaps as it was one of the last great campaigns before the Mycenaean world started to collapse in on itself, a suitable foundation for oral poets in the following centuries wanting to compose a tale about the heroism and deeds of former battles.

From that process of oral composition and re-composition grew the fabulous and fantastical stories of the Trojan War, of which the *Iliad* is a crowning glory. It is followed by its sister narrative, Homer's *Odyssey*, which tells the stories of the ten-year return of the Greek warrior Odysseus to his home. As such, the heroes of antiquity can be assured of one thing: they achieved their desire for immortal glory. ⊙

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**MICHAEL SCOTT is professor of classics and ancient history at the University of Warwick, fellow of the Royal Historical Society, and director and trustee of Classics for All. As well as being an author, he has presented a number of programmes for BBC television and radio, including *Ancient Invisible Cities* for BBC Two.**

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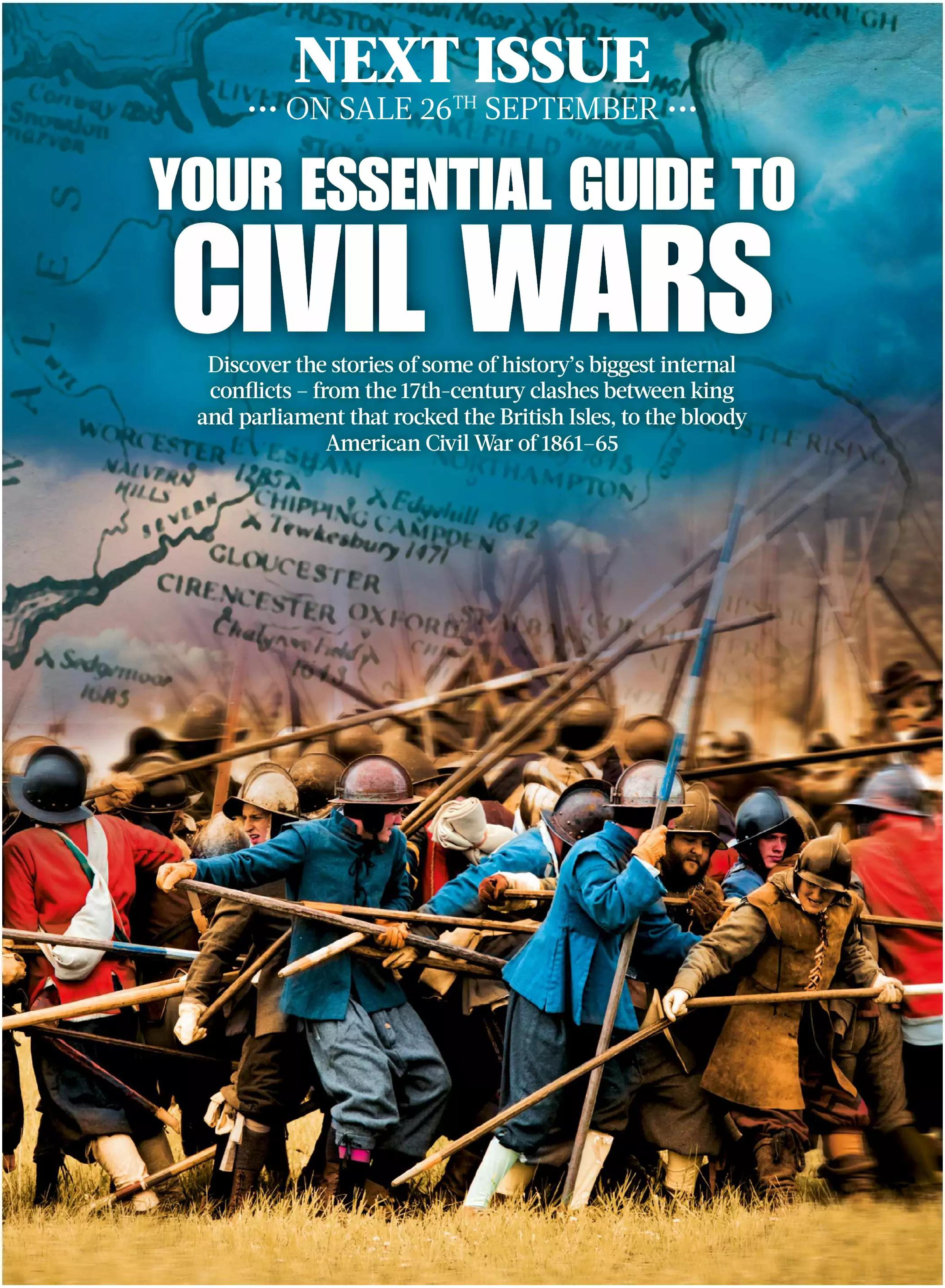
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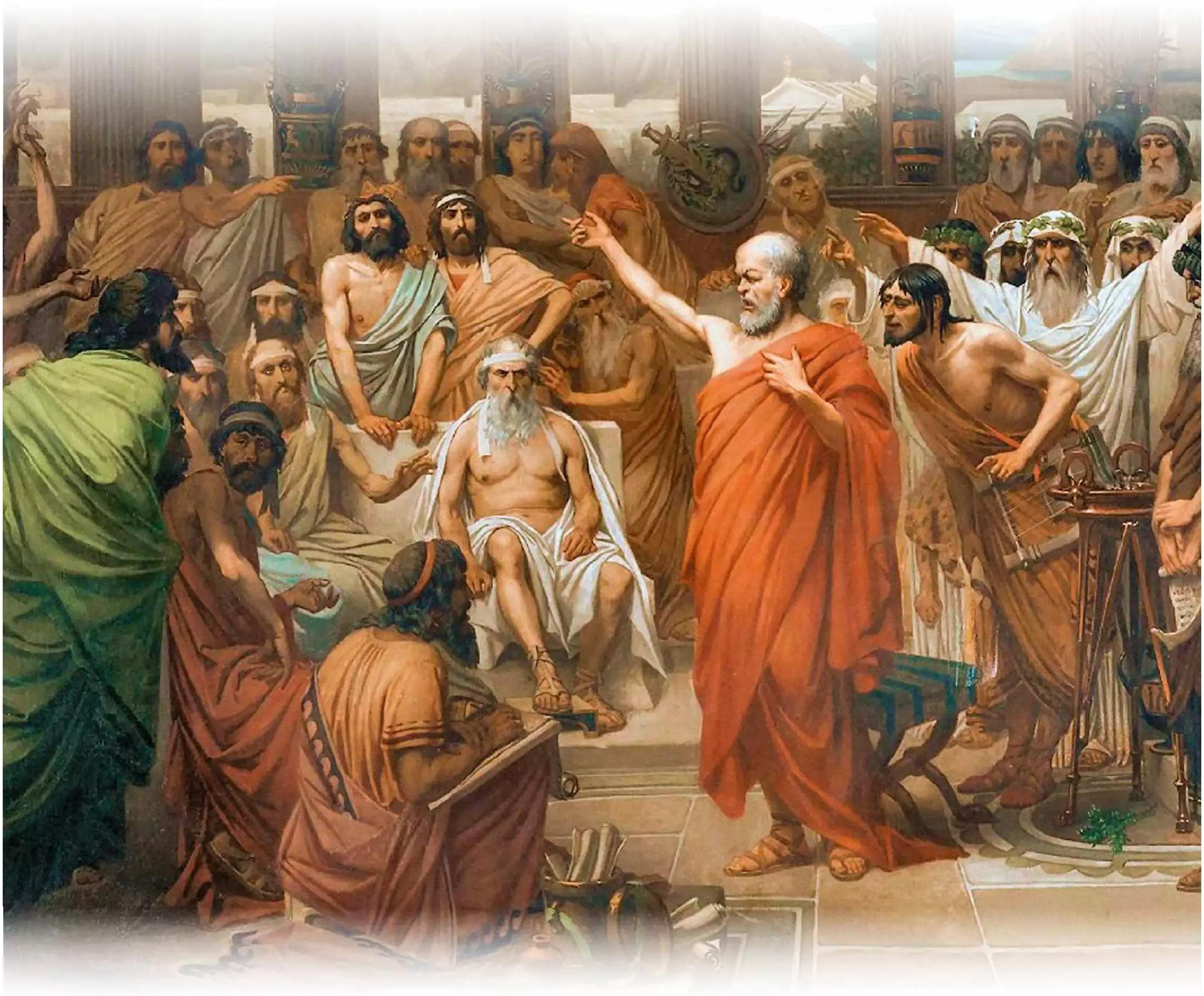

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